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THIS IS MY LIFE



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Vernon Bartlett

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In nearly every capital of Europe there are two or three people whose cheery and friendly welcome gives a certain pleasurable excitement to each subsequent visit. To such friends, at home as well as abroad, this book is dedicated.

To the *News Chronicle*, *The Times*, the B.B.C., Reuter's Agency, and the *Daily Mail* I owe gratitude for giving me the opportunities of picking up the experience on which this book is based. I gladly acknowledge my debt—how nice it would be if all debts could be settled by a few amiable words in this way—and regret that I cannot thank everybody who has helped in one way or another. That would lengthen the book and put up its price.

V. B.

FOREWORD

THE camera, they used to say, cannot lie. But it can do more than that. It can distort, beautify, change beyond recognition. Modern films have shown us how odd man can look when photographed from the ground or the housetop. Some of the best photographs I have ever seen were taken by a Scottish doctor eighty years ago. They are perfect in every detail except for the fact that human beings were generally bored by an exposure of twenty minutes or so, and moved or walked away, so that they appear on the photograph as the transparent ghosts of men long since dead. A blunt and downright lie is much less deceptive than a distorted truth.

There are no blunt and downright lies in this book, but I cannot swear to the absolute accuracy of the details in the pages that follow. I have tried to put down on paper some of the photographic records I have made in my two-score and three years. But I know that some of them are embroidered and beautified, although I honestly can no longer tell where fact ends and fiction begins. Some are distorted by prejudice and dislike. But on the whole they are truthful.

And then one must apologise for writing an autobiography before reaching the normal limit of existence. This book owes its existence in part to a young

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publisher with whom I travelled back from the United States (and to whom I apologise because I have not asked his firm to produce it). He played so neatly on my vanity that he convinced me a book about people who have long been dead is as little interesting as the pressed and withered violets with which the more sentimental of us seek to retain memories of our calf-love days. Some hundreds of people might still be interested by an account of the famous lunch which Briand and Stresemann ate ten years ago in the little French village of Thoiry, when one hoped for an immediate reconciliation between their two great and uncomprehending peoples. But not more than a score of people would be interested if, thirty years hence, I wrote out in weak and wavering handwriting a description of the ash tray piled high with cigar-butts (to which subsequent pilgrims to the café added a contribution or two) that stood on the table between the two men while they argued about peace between the French and the Germans, so little different, in their mutual distrust, from the Western and the Eastern Franks from whom they are descended.

One more apology. As a man who earns his living by his pen, his typewriter or his dictaphone, I have written a great deal about my experiences and opinions elsewhere. Inevitably much that has appeared in print or boomed out from the loud speaker is repeated here. In particular, some of the reminiscences here recorded have already appeared in much the same form in a book called *The Brighter Side of European Chaos*. To any chance reader of that earlier effort I apologise. I can assure him that he is a very exceptional man, for *The*

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Brighter Side of European Chaos reached an extremely limited public. I was to get no royalty until two hundred copies had been sold, and I have had no royalty. I must somehow retrieve the four pounds I expended on having that book typed. This is my effort to do so!

PART ONE

CHAPTER I

My first remembered action in this life is one which I would prefer to forget. But it must be recorded, for the jealousy which it betrays has persisted and, at times, has made me and others around me quite unnecessarily miserable.

I am in one of those little folding go-carts, being wheeled home from the beach at Bournemouth. My sister, three years my senior, is tired and is allowed to sit for a while on the bottom step of my chariot. And I, jealous and bad-tempered little beast, kick at her small behind with all my might.

Why? Heaven knows, except that I am angry when attention is shown to others than myself. There is in me, as I suppose this book will show, a considerable leavening of anxious conceit. It's less that I want to do things superbly well, than that I don't want to do them conspicuously less well than others. And this applies not merely to those things to which I have to devote, or want to devote, a lot of my time and energy. I am jealous of success in every field of human activity, to such an extent that, although I have never shown the slightest sign of being a tennis player, I am made so miserable by the skill of the players at Wimbledon that I never go there.

I have done many mean and ungenerous things in my life, and have slandered even people I love, to my

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subsequent regret. In almost every case my motive has been jealousy. People without that beastly weakness do not know how fortunate they are.

I planned to write this book long before I knew that confession is good for the pocket as well as for the soul. But I do not propose to give up many pages to introspection. I quite realise that the struggles that go on behind my rotund, sleek exterior are of no interest to anybody outside that circle of people whom I know well enough to make happier or more miserable. And those people, more detached than I can be, probably have me so neatly docketed in their own minds that they need no confession of mine. I have such an unfortunate habit of spreading far and wide my ambitions and adventures that, to them, this book is unnecessary.

But, just as I have always eaten the nastier food first and kept the tit-bits until the end, I may as well begin by announcing my nastiest quality, which makes me envious of everyone who is a better writer, swimmer, lover, snooker-player than I am; who is less fat, more amusing, less lazy, more courageous, less selfish, more at his ease than I am.

I have, too, besides this jealousy, a strong sense of personal possessions which brands me as a capitalist. It became obvious when I was still very young. On wet afternoons my two sisters and I would wrap small presents up into parcels and exchange them at a given signal. There was always a struggle between the desire to give away nothing of value and the desire to win gratitude and praise by some act of generosity. I can remember to this day that nice warm feeling of giving pleasure by being generous, but I suspect that

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I more often received the gifts I wanted than did my sisters and that, when I was really open-handed with some small treasure, I regretted it later and had an argument about its ownership.

And I remember very vividly making a grand garden some three yards square in Branksome Woods. It had an astonishing variety of small twigs to represent trees, and ornamental water made out of a small pie-dish and some pebbles, a real gravel path and a gate. That plot of ground, I argued to myself, was mine for all time. (It is long since built over by some other poor boob who shares the same illusion on a more grandiose scale), and I wept angry tears when I returned next day to discover that some anonymous nihilist had trampled the flower beds and kicked down the walls. The pie-dish, in an early fit of scepticism, I had already removed myself. That I should still so vividly remember my indignation and despair is a valuable reminder of the importance I attached then (and, I suspect, have attached at all subsequent periods) to the possession of property.

* * *

There are two other small memories of my youth which, I suppose, would have enabled a practised psychologist to foresee that, unless I were suitably analysed and altered, I should become what I am—a restless individual, unable to describe anything without additions and embroideries and lacking profound knowledge of any subject including myself and the foreign affairs in which I am supposed to specialise. I scraped through the London Matriculation with honours, or whatever they are called, for an essay on

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the scenery of Scotland at a time when Norfolk was my farthest north. I had already earned my first cheque of half a guinea for stating on a postcard the best reasons why my dog preferred So-and-so's dog cakes, although, when put to the test, ugly, conservative old Monty resolutely refused to eat the new-fangled stuff. A psycho-analyst who ignored—as so many people do ignore—the tremendous efforts made by the average newspaper man to ferret out the truth in time to catch the next edition would have had no difficulty in predicting that the dishonest imagination shown in my writings on dogs and Scotland would inevitably bring me to Fleet Street.

I should have contradicted him, for in those days I was determined to write books and not mere newspaper articles. At my preparatory school I wrote a masterpiece about Red Indians and a hero called Mr Read whom they besieged in a log cabin. It appeared in a magazine, a dozen copies of which we produced by a horrible gelatinous process. At my public school I had my first literary disappointment in the form of a rejection, by the editor of *The Captain*—that magazine of envied and adventurous heroes—of a story in which the pious but innocent sneak was thrashed by a farmer for stealing apples while the attractive but thieving hero was somehow unsuspected. This vindication of the old-school-tie system, which enables any evil-minded little bully to destroy the whole spirit of a school in the comfortable knowledge that it is “not done” to tell on him, should surely have been accepted if I had really possessed the writing talent I so desired.

So perhaps it is just as well that, instead of inhabiting

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a Cornish cottage at a rental of £9 a year and writing about "Life", of which I knew nothing, I drifted into a profession which, probably more than any other, shows one life with the lid off. If I had not been hampered by a certain cowardly reluctance to make the most of my journalistic opportunities for peeping into private lives, I should by now have collected enough raw material for all the writing of fiction my earlier ambitions could have desired. But it *was* a nice cottage, within a couple of hundred yards of Lamorna Cove. It had gnarled apple trees where the front garden should have been, and not one of those "modern" conveniences which I then thought so much less important than I do now.

The restlessness which sends me—declaring as I go how much I should enjoy a quiet life—wandering around more than the average citizen would have been foretold by any psychologist who had visited me in my bedroom during those two days during which I was confined there for theft. The red and blue weals across my white behind where my father had thrashed me doubtless looked magnificently patriotic but they hurt a great deal. Less, however, than the knowledge, gathered from a copy of *Eric, or Little by Little* which my mother had given me, that my adventures as the leader of my little gang of robbers showed I had gone a long way towards becoming a dangerous criminal.

I am never likely to forget the anxiety with which, on the second afternoon of my imprisonment, I crept along the passage to find Mother's prayer-book, and the relief when I discovered that the creed referred not to the confession, but to the remission, of sins. I did

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not know what remission meant, but it seemed probable that I should be spared the terrible humiliation of standing up in public, at some time in this life or the next, and confessing that I had stolen tubes of tooth-paste, an occasional caramel, and the fatal bottle of gold paint which had brought me to discovery and disaster.

Robbery had no particular attractions for me, but I was eight or nine years old, and rather bored. Why, when the sea and Branksome Woods were within a mile of our home, I still don't know, unless I am correct in believing that childhood, about whose happiness we talk such a lot of sloppy nonsense, has more periods of boredom than any other of the ages of man. Anyhow, bored I was. I had not the physical courage which would have enabled me to find all the adventure I needed in fights with the Council School boys up the road—on the contrary, I made a considerable detour each day to avoid them, even though I risked meeting two sister schoolgirls who used to giggle contemptuously at me and embarrass me nearly as much as I was embarrassed on the ill-starred day when my Mother sent me, with none but English blood in my veins, to my kindergarten clad in a kilt. So adventure had to be found elsewhere. As a cowboy I did considerable damage with bows-and-arrows and air guns, and two of my camp fires led to the accidental burning of large areas of common land. One of these fires we could see from our bedroom windows, and with mingled terror and pride I watched the ravages of which I was the cause. My feelings on that night must have been very close to those which have led many thousands along the road to desperate crime, and my boastful

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desire afterwards to let out the secret has made me understand why so many criminals give themselves away.

But I could not set the moor on fire every day. I could not always drop nasturtium seeds from the flat roof of my father's office on to the heads of passers-by, for they so often turned out to be irate customers of the bank of which he was manager. My sister and I could not often climb along girders under the Alum Chine Suspension Bridge in order to squirt water between its planks up the legs of people who crossed it, for the police were too watchful. While the supply lasted I had a glorious time stealing camphorated oil out of the medicine chest, pouring it on some puddle, and setting fire to it, but my parents suspected that I could not be threatened with a sore throat so often as I pretended and I could not afford to buy camphorated oil out of my penny a week pocket-money. There was, I think, no solution but to form my little gang of evil-doers.

At first we were contented with ringing bells and running away, ragging various people in authority from a safe distance, firing our catapults at the street lamps, or exploring at night back passages and alleys and other people's gardens. But finally all these amusements lost their attraction. Adventure, we discovered, must be taken in larger, and yet larger, doses. The obvious next step was to try our skill in competition with that of the local shopkeepers.

There was, in the first place, the fun of inventing an excuse for entering the shop at all, for we seldom had the money with which to buy anything—all our pocket-money went on packets of foreign stamps. The excuse had to appear so reasonable that it aroused

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no suspicion, and it was not easy for four or five grubby little boys to make it so. Then we had to decide who was to do the talking, who to do the taking and who to distract the shopkeeper's attention. Hesitation or clumsiness on the part of one might give us all away, and it never occurred to us that, as middle-class children who were thieving for no desperate reason, we were more likely to escape very serious consequences of discovery than were poorer children who stole on account of hunger and need. In self-justification I can declare that we always exaggerated the punishments that might be given us if we were caught.

Of course, we were caught. Caught while stealing an entirely unwanted bottle of gold paint from the shop of a kindly little man not one of us would have wanted to injure—only we did not then look at it in that way! I knew we were discovered although he said nothing to us as we left. But I slunk off home with a sinking feeling which all the Bovril in the world could not have banished, and a few minutes later my father summoned me into his office to confront the shopkeeper, to confess, to apologise and to be punished. I believe all the surviving members of my gang except one have since become excessively respectable and law-abiding citizens, and I daresay their respective punishments knocked the desire for adventure out of them. With me, it conveniently altered the course of that desire into less objectionable channels. It is more respectable and less risky to pick people's brains than their pockets.

* * *

One last incident of my early boyhood. On summer

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Sunday afternoons, after the Children's Service where my favourite hymn was that revolting piece of diehard propaganda beginning: "All things bright and beautiful", my sister and I would wander off to a field where we caught butterflies under my straw hat and pressed them between the pages of my prayer-book. Not a very nice habit, but perhaps no more cruel than a still earlier sport which consisted of tying a dead fly to one of my sister's discarded hairs and dropping it into the goldfish tank in the drawing-room. Far more skill was required to tell just when a goldfish had got the fly so far down into its inside that I could jerk it out on to the carpet than is needed to hook a mackerel or a perch, but even so keen a fisherman as my father did not appreciate that view of it when he came into the room and caught me. Nor did the goldfish mind—at any rate they never learnt that swallowing a housefly on a silky-looking thread was invariably followed by an eructation which lifted them out of their cool native element into unbreathable air.

But suddenly I got religion. I have forgotten how and why, but it was very serious while it lasted. I tried in vain to rub out the horrible stains in my prayer-book, and I determined to put my faith to a grave test. If I had as much of it as a grain of mustard seed I could throw myself off the flat roof of our house and not hurt myself. That seemed to me rather a drastic thing to do, but there was one short staircase at home which should serve the purpose equally well.

After an infinity of hesitation, I gave a colossal jump. Possibly the very fact of hesitating was the proof that I had no faith. In any case, instead of being wafted

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gently down to the landing, I crashed badly and had to hobble about for days or weeks with a swollen ankle. And at no subsequent time—even during those moments when I have been so happy or so moved that I felt almost superhuman—have I really been able to convince myself that I am so important that God would think it worth while to keep part of me in existence throughout all eternity.

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FOR a variety of reasons all of which happen to be quite respectable I left school at the early age of sixteen, and thus lost most of the benefits my parents had hoped to gain for me by sending me at immense sacrifice on their part to one of those absurdly private institutions known to the British as a "public school". At seventeen I went abroad to learn languages in the vague belief that I might one day become a consul and make an honourable career by bailing drunken British sailors out of gaol.

At Bournemouth I had managed to fall in love with a German girl from the town of Bromberg, province Posen—a town which is now situated in the very middle of the Polish corridor, and which even then must have contained a fair proportion of Polish inhabitants. I managed somehow to persuade my father, who knew nothing of Germany, that the best accent was to be found, not, as was generally imagined, in Hanover, but in this rather remote district. And so for several months I was gloriously spoiled by the Brombergers, delighted to have such a rarity as an English visitor. I was both more happy and more miserable than I had ever been before, for the girl whom I loved had already become engaged to a hefty young medical student whose physical strength and courage rendered ridiculous my poor efforts to show off. I, as a cold-blooded English-

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man, was allowed to go for whole-day excursions with Ina in the endless pine forests that surrounded Bromberg. But I got no fun out of that, for always I would trot around to my rival's home and let him know where and when Ina and he could meet. Then, while they wandered about among the lilies of the valley, I would lie face downwards among the pine needles having a grand time digging away at the scented earth with my despairing fingers.

It was the very hot summer of 1911. My host, the one member of the family who remained unflinchingly kind and understanding during the tribulations that followed, was up every morning at four. He would turn the garden hose on to his fruit trees and would then go indoors and play Chopin to himself. Thus, morning after morning, I was aroused by a lovely blending of sound. Never since have I heard a Chopin valse or nocturne without seeing again in my mind's eye that untidy garden with its trees bent under their richness of fruit, that piano with its top covered with photographs, those table-cloths with tassels bobbing from their edges, those kindly people separated from me now by the tremendous abyss of the Great War.

Nearly twenty years after I came across the diary I kept during that period. I would take it out and read it for the amusement of guests who came to dine, for it was packed with details which seemed to me laughably naïve. On the day when Ina told me she didn't really love me I wrote in my list of daily expenses, "Cigarettes for the night, 80 pfennige", and then, no doubt, went to bed and slept as soundly as at any other time.

But each time I read out a phrase from this diary I

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experienced a sense of dishonesty and disloyalty. The boy who had written them was so unlike myself that I felt as though I were reading someone else's private letters. And the boy had suffered or enjoyed things much more keenly than I could do (or so I then believed). I became ashamed of my mockery of something that had beauty about it.

So that, after a while, I took to reading my diary, not that I might laugh at it but that I might recapture the vivid sensations which had been with me when I wrote it. I realised that I had never passed more quickly from exaltation to misery, from a sense of holiness and awe to one of dirt and disgust as on that morning when Frau Eichholz came into Ina's bedroom to scold her for oversleeping and found me almost on my knees by her bedside. I was a boy of seventeen and I loved her. My glance as I passed her door which her sister had carelessly left open was involuntary. But the sun shone on her hair, spread out over the pillow, in such a way that I could hardly breathe. I stood in the doorway and stared as one might stare in the presence of a miracle. I came nearer the bed, and had the formulation of words been necessary or possible I should have prayed, less in longing than in thanksgiving. Something so very precious had been granted to me . . . and then that large, fat, suspicious woman burst open the door that communicated with her own room and found me standing by her daughter's bed.

And the untidy scraggling handwriting in the diary brought back to me those awful days that followed before I could get my parents to summon me back to England. Everything around me was dirty. Ina her-

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self had not understood. Her sister, who hated me, made my humiliation and misery as complete as she could. I rose at four in the morning to catch the train, and just as Herr Eichholz was seeing my luggage piled in the old-fashioned cab and I was closing the front door for the last time, I heard Ina's slippers on the stairs. A quick kiss to show I was forgiven for a crime I had never committed, and the most terrible weight I had ever known was lifted.

Small wonder that after reading and re-reading that diary I wrote a novel based on it.¹ In turn someone based a play on the novel, and I was so flattered that I never even asked to read the script before the first night at one of the small repertory theatres that then flourished, or at least existed, in London. I asked all my friends to the opening performance and turned up in my evening clothes, very conspicuous in the dingy and shabby hall.

The play had become the most sentimental affair on earth. The bedroom scene was supposed to be *the* moving scene of the play, but a dozen people sniggered. I sat in my conspicuous stall and sweated until there remained not one square inch of stiff shirt-front. And, after the second act, I slunk away. When my confounded jealousy makes me envious of my playwright friends I have at least, after that opening performance of *Calf Love*, the decency not to envy them on their first nights, however grand the list of those present.

* * *

I must have been incredibly sentimental and romantic

¹ *Calf Love*. Constable & Co.

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in those Bromberg days. Nobody ever had a larger collection of ribbons, theatre programmes and faded flowers. Before I had abandoned the luxury of being miserable about Bromberg I fell in love again with the daughter of the doctor's family with which I lived in Fiesole. How I managed to do so I hardly know, for I was never alone with her for five minutes. If I came into the living-room when she was there she got up and left it unless there was someone to chaperon us, and we always had a German companion with us on our walks to Monte Ceceri. But I loved her enough to weep all the way down in the cab from Fiesole to Florence, past the white walls of villas that were smothered in wistaria. Nor could tears be swallowed back as I leant out of the train window until the twin hills with the Campanile of Fiesole Cathedral between them had irrevocably disappeared. Then I sat down on my precious bowler hat with which I had reserved a corner seat, and was much too miserable to be angry or amused.

After Florence came Paris and Madrid. In the first city I fell in love with a Norwegian in the same *pension* and tried to starve myself when, as gently as possible, she said "no" to me. As I was only eighteen at the time I don't see why she should have said anything else, but I did my best to be desperately miserable and was very ashamed of myself when a hearty appetite sent me across to the *pâtisserie* at the corner of the Rue de l'École de Médecine to make up for my wan refusal to eat at meals in our *pension*. I wrote atrocious verse, and my misery even inspired a German girl there to write rather better verse to encourage me to face life again.

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Madrid was different, for there my unhappiness was genuine. On arrival I knew nobody and no Spanish. I went there hurriedly because my father and I came to the conclusion that there was not room for us both in our fairly large home, and I finally settled in a boarding-house where I had a room so small that I had to kneel on my bed when I wanted to pull my trunk out from under it to get at my clean clothes. Its one window opened on to the corridor. But the boarding-house had one entertaining inhabitant who was an Englishman with a private income of a few hundreds a year, very snobbish instincts, and a magnificent gift for lying. Because his Christian name was Percy he convinced the inhabitants of Madrid that he was a relation of the Duke of Northumberland. Apart from a slightly caddish trick of using me as his messenger to his mistress when her husband became too suspicious and jealous, he was a good friend to me and strongly disapproved of my other friends.

I could not blame him, for they were the most scurrilous lot I have ever met. I mixed with them because I was so desperately lonely and had nobody to talk to, and I only met them in the first place because, after forty-eight hours during which I spoke to nobody, I saw that a man crossing the Puerta del Sol wore his trousers turned up at the bottoms. That proved that he was an Englishman, and my loneliness was so great that it overcame my nervousness at talking to a stranger. He took pity on me and brought me to a second-rate café where I met his friends who, in turn, became my friends. One was a grubby little gambler whom I never saw except in a shiny dinner-jacket suit. An-

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other was a clerk who took drugs. They spent many of their evenings in brothels, and I went with them. Only while they disappeared from the room on missions that were mysterious to me I sat drinking beer and trying to learn Spanish.

Somehow I met two German girls and a young German man who were putting on a living statuary show at a local music hall. One girl seemed to me bewilderingly beautiful and I was unutterably flattered when she sent me a free ticket for a performance. There she was with her companions, and, as I now remember it, she seemed to be clad in very little except bronze paint. I was shocked but still adoring, and spent very much more money than I could afford on taking her to the bull-fight. She was alluring, and the most self-assured young woman I had ever met. But at one moment during the afternoon she happened to turn her head away and behind her ears was still the bronze paint from the previous evening's performance. And she never knew why my ardour suddenly disappeared.

Percy—"El Señor Duque" as people called him—came as far as Valladolid with me on my way back to England. He had friends there to whom he introduced me as the Count of Ashford, and I was so terrified lest somebody should have a British reference book and show me up that I left Spain with one fresh conviction—that in no circumstances could I ever succeed as an impostor.

* * *

I must have been a rather poisonous young prig, and

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my father expressed excusable doubts as to whether I should ever succeed in earning my own living. He found a post for me with a city firm, somewhere near the Tower of London. I was to look after the firm's foreign correspondence for the princely salary of fifty-two pounds a year. I went there one morning, was mercilessly snubbed, hated the place, and never went back again. Instead, I went to a scholastic agency in Holborn with an advertisement I had cut out of the paper, and, by lying about my age, obtained a post as English teacher at a Berlin language school for thirty marks a week.

For some months I lived in the shortest and one of the worst streets in Berlin's East End—the Wasser-gasse—off the Köpenickerstrasse. I shared an enormous room with a fellow teacher from Lancashire. Until then I had always been horrified that my father, as a bank manager, had to be respectful to bank inspectors who dropped their aitches. My friend, Jones, who seldom did anything else with them, was the first Socialist I had ever met, and he set out, very successfully, to abolish many of these prejudices I had formed at school. I was jealous of him, for he was more popular than I with the pupils and he taught English with a wonderful Lancashire accent which caused those of them who were transferred to me to complain that I, coming from the South of England, could not speak English properly. Probably they were right. But I am still grateful to him both for his burning indignation over any injustice and for a habit he had, whenever two glasses of beer were inside him, of dancing about the floor of our room dressed in

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nothing but his wide-brimmed hat, his glasses and his shirt. He came from a small town where his sister had just made an excellent match by marrying the local policeman, who was always known by the name of "Sleepy Jesus".

For our room and coffee and rusks in the morning we each paid twenty-three shillings a month; we lunched at a *Mittagstisch* in a private house for sixpence—soup, meat, vegetable, sweet, with a halfpenny extra for a small glass of beer; we supped at Aschinger's on *Bierwürstchen mit Kartoffelsalat* for fourpence. And once or twice a week when we felt really wicked we went to the Piccadilly Café, now part of the gigantic Haus Vaterland, to order a cup of coffee and possibly a liqueur, and to sit over our drink until the orchestra packed up at six in the morning. Then home for a wash and a shave, feeling that we had really been "seeing Life". These modest enjoyments made it possible for me to put aside several pounds to show to my rather incredulous father, but I spent them all in three or four days in Hamburg on the homeward journey—although I stayed in a Christliches Hospiz, where a large Bible was placed each evening by my bed and where the hall porter, when I asked him the first evening how I could best amuse myself in Hamburg, gave me a list of churches that had evening services. And the tragic part of that first and greatest bout of extravagance is that today I can remember not one single thing on which I spent my money.

The hours at our language school were unpleasant. There would be odd lessons to give during the day,

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and then four classes, one immediately after the other, every evening from half-past six until half-past ten, after which we were free to go to Aschinger's for our sausages. When we had no lessons we were often put on to do translations, and I must have done quite a lot to hamper German trade in England before the war. I still remember making a terrible muddle of a catalogue sent in by some manufacturers of corsets and medical belts. On one occasion I spent nearly a week translating a long scheme for constructing the Channel Tunnel at very low cost, and I certainly understood less of the technicalities of the scheme even in English than I do of the Einstein theory. The Channel Tunnel, I notice, is still unbuilt.

Of the actual lessons, the less said the better. The most difficult were those given to pupils with a fair knowledge of English who came for private conversation. Politics were barred, religion was barred and too often my pupil and I would sit facing each other in silence for minutes at a time while I racked my brain in vain for some suitable topic of conversation. But one class was even worse, for I was young and therefore all the more suitable for "ragging".

I have never entirely escaped from a distaste for Thursdays because I had a large class of young employees of the Allgemeine Electricitäts Gesellschaft on Thursday evenings from nine-thirty to ten-thirty—just when I had least energy left for the job. They were not even impelled to be attentive by a desire to get their money's worth, for their firm paid for their lessons. They were all of them older than I, and on the very first evening I made the capital mistake of

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treating them as equals, and not as inferiors. They interpreted my good-humour as weakness (and Heaven knows they were right) and they set out to rag me as I should have done had I been in their place. Had I met them in a café I should have been delighted by them; as it was I grew to hate them as I had hardly ever hated anybody before. I almost hope that their leader, Herr Nass, did not survive the war.

He was a great burly fellow who brought matters to a head when he handed me, with his exercise book, the first filthy postcard I had ever seen. He must have shown it round the class before I came in, for there was a roar of laughter at my embarrassment which at once turned it to rage. "Herr Nass," I said in icy tones, "leave the room at once."

And Herr Nass, damn him, sat where he was.

He must have been six inches taller and five stone heavier than I. Even if I called in the director to help me, we could not have thrown him out by force, for the director was a minute Frenchman with a wispy beard. I was defeated. "You heard what I said," I went on; "if I have any more trouble from you, you must leave the room."

But Herr Nass and all his colleagues *had* heard what I said, *had* heard me order him out, *had* seen him disobey me. I went that evening to the director and confessed that nothing on earth would make me face that class again. Jones took over and never had the slightest trouble with it. And I, on my return to England, wrote a long letter of apology to a charming but weak master, Little Bill, who had left my public school with a nervous breakdown brought on by the

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way in which I, amongst others, made life hell for him.

* * *

One evening I came home and found my landlady in a state of elation and excitement. A distinguished gentleman had climbed to our dark flat on the fourth floor and had left a letter with a heavily-embossed coronet on the envelope. Such gentlemen were not often seen in the Wassergasse. Everybody had noticed him and my stock soared.

He was a certain Baron who, during the war, was to become one of the most important men in the German Secret Service. He had met my father and, as he wanted a young English secretary, he wondered whether I should be suitable for the job. I was invited to lunch with him on the following Sunday at one of the best hotels in Berlin.

On Saturday this stupendous event had to be duly celebrated, and a party of us went to a favourite *Automat*, which, as some fortunate people may not know, is a restaurant where you obtain your food and drink by putting pennies in the slot. There were many different kinds of beer and many different kinds of liqueurs. To wish me luck my friends treated me all the way down the row, all the way back, and all the way down again.

For the first time in my life I became terribly drunk. I ran a grave danger, for, on my way home, I wanted desperately to relieve nature. There was a very large building in front of me which, I thought, would do as well as any other. Just as I proceeded on my drunken way a sentry marched round the corner and I realised that I had selected the Kaiser's Palace. Had the sentry

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been twenty seconds earlier I should have missed my lunch with my Baron.

I very nearly did so in any case, for I awoke with a deathly sickness upon me. No man ever walked more gingerly than I along the Leipzigerstrasse and, although I had not had a really good meal for months, I dared not touch any of the delicacies that were put before me by Berlin's most obsequious waiters. Wherever I looked were great mirrors which sent back the reflection of my greenish-yellow face. Perhaps, I suggested feebly, I had eaten something which had disagreed with me.

The Baron was no fool. He must rightly have diagnosed my trouble but probably erred over the frequency with which it might recur. He wanted no young drunkard as a secretary and, in consequence, I never became involved in the German Secret Service. So I had to return, very humiliated, to the language school until, a few months later, I was dismissed from it with ignominy.

I was sacked when the little French director came suddenly into a room while I was giving a private lesson to a very large, blonde woman and found her sitting on my knee. How she got there I don't know, but I can hardly believe that I took the initiative. For, unless I happened to be in love with one of them, I was very frightened of women and had been since the first girl I had dared to accost in the streets of Bournemouth turned on me and told me to go home and change my face. But my pupil was a woman and, far more important still, she was one who paid for private lessons, so I was selected for dismissal. A notice was sent

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round to the teachers after my departure to warn them that in future the table must always be between them and any pupil of the opposite sex. But, like most reformers, I was hard up. I was left with no job and the urgent necessity of finding one.

In Berlin I had one set of smart friends. The father was a charming and cultivated Jew who directed a quartet which was then famous in musical circles the world over. I had met the daughters some time before in Paris, where most people snubbed them because they were Germans, and because I had not joined in the snubbing they were grateful enough to me to invite me to Sunday parties which were so terrifying that the first time I was asked I was sick with panic on their doorstep.

Seeing no possibility of earning a living in Berlin, I packed up and went to say good-bye to my friends, without explaining exactly why I had severed my relations with the language school. The father called me into his study and asked about the future. How did I expect to get into the Consular Service, he wanted to know, if I still went on giving lessons in a language school? Surely I ought to go to some university?

I explained that my parents had already spent more money on my education than they could properly afford, and that therefore I must make my way as best I could. My German thought things over for a moment and then, in the most delicate way possible, he made this proposal to me. I was to tell my father that I was going to study for two years at Berlin University, and two years at the Sorbonne in Paris. My German friend would pay all my expenses, and I should repay him

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after I had got into the Consular Service. I came back to England to put this offer before my father. Before a definite decision had been reached war broke out, and my German's only son was one of the very earliest casualties.

I do not know what has happened to the family. I once made a great effort to find them, but failed. Presumably now, since they are Jews, they are in exile, in miserable retirement, or in a concentration camp. With perhaps three exceptions, every German I have known who has done much to make me love his country second only to my own has had Jewish blood in his veins. But presumably Herr Hitler knows his own business best.

CHAPTER III

ONLY in retrospect does one realise how abominable an interference war was with our comfortable and settled lives. It had much the same effect on us as a bomb dropped, with no previous declaration of war, on a quiet English country vicarage. I am no longer sure that war is a greater evil than abominable injustice, despite the fresh injustices it must bring in its train. But I am sure that there can be no civilisation and no prosperity until war and its causes have been abolished.

We were all so safe! While we were at school the future worried us so little. We asked ourselves not whether we should ever get a job but what sort of job we would select. We were trained to consider life as a comfortable affair in which those of us who could talk without Cockney accents or without dropping our aitches were the elect of God. So little—so much too little!—disturbed our self-assurance.

I do not suggest that I was a self-assured and successful little boy. I enjoyed few events connected with my school-days, mainly because I was in many ways a physical coward. As part of our training in the football season we were made to do a certain number of "pull-ups" on the rings that swung from the middle of the changing-room ceiling, and if our performance failed to satisfy the all-important monitors or "rugger caps"

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we were pelted with football boots. I was short, fat and not very muscular, and I would have invented any illness, had I known how, and told any lie to escape that ordeal. And I don't think I ever achieved a courageous tackle at "rugger" or caught a difficult ball at cricket except in self-defence. On wet days we had to run along the high road to a place called the Beeches, which would have been pretty had I not been so often chased to it by a monitor with a swagger cane because I lagged so far behind my colleagues. I was useful to my house only in the swimming-baths, and even there I was regularly sick with panic in the lavatory before my turn came to perform before the whole school.

And yet I doubt whether half a dozen boys were bolder or more ingenious in their apple-stealing campaigns against the local farmers. I regularly broke bounds in the most foolhardy way in order to bathe in the River Exe. And I started a craze for climbing along outside the study windows on the second floor of my house, a feat nothing could persuade me to try now, when my legs are longer but my imagination is keener.

One of my early troubles at school was that my parents bought me a very swagger and expensive overcoat. It was too elegant and too light in colour to be worn by anybody who had failed to achieve fame. That coat caused me intense mortification, but my father was poor and could not easily understand or remember how desperately desirable it is for one small public school boy to look as much as possible like every other small public school boy. It would have been reprehensible enough had I worn my handkerchief in my cuff or my hair parted in the middle or the bottom button of my

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waistcoat undone before I had reached the position which justified such elegances, but my overcoat flaunted my defiance of fashion in a way which was bound to get me into trouble. My sufferings on account of it taught me one very important fact—how frequently bullying turns the victim of it himself into a bully of any smaller and weaker boys. Possibly, too, they developed in me a keen hatred of those political bullies who become dictators and a keen sympathy with the under-dogs of this world.

But even though I did not greatly enjoy my school-days, there was a certain spacious security about them, which these rigid caste conventions served to emphasise. One knew where one was! And the memories of occasional unhappinesses were so quickly obliterated by the happiness of holidays and of the years that followed schooling. We lived a mile away from the sea at Bournemouth, with the lovely Purbeck Hills in easy cycling reach. In those days I knew the call and appearance of almost every British bird, and I am far more sorry that I have forgotten so many of them now than that I have forgotten what are poundals or logarithms or the methods of proving that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal and that two sides of a triangle are inevitably longer than the third.

When we went away on holidays it was to Beer, in South Devon, where our fisherman landlord, Tom Woodgate, would throw pebbles at my window at dawn so that I could go out with him to pull up the lobster pots. Sometimes when I sit in the Foreign Office arguing about British foreign policy or the lack of it

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my attention suddenly wanders. Outside in St. James's Park a sea-gull has given that wild mocking laugh which always takes me back to the days (divided from me now by that abyss of war and chaos) when, with its mainsail filling before the first morning breeze, the *Pet* would creep round beneath the chalk cliffs of Beer Head and make for the open channel.

I remember so vividly the bitter cold and the relief of the first warmth from the rising sun; the skill with which Tom would cut up the bait for the next lobster pot, the thrill of peering over the stern to see what the pot contained; the proud hesitating skill with which I steered the boat while Tom leant over the bow, gaff in hand, to pick up the next string of corks; the quick and purposeful flight of black cormorants against the white chalk of the coastline; the joy of returning to a large breakfast of bacon and eggs and stewed tea—how could I, with parents who taught me to see so much that was beautiful and enjoyable in the world, do otherwise than loathe war, which destroys the pigeon-haunted larch copses with its splintering shells and hides the rich smell of the earth under the stink of its poison gases?

There were great days, too, after I had left school. When I was not adventuring abroad I was—or I thought I was—quite an important figure at home. Before I left for my stay in Bromberg I obtained a passport, since I should be so near Russia which was almost the only country in Europe where such a document was necessary. So few people at the Badminton Club had ever seen a passport before! In Madrid I somehow spent far more money than I should have done and I

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invented a vivid tale about how I had been chloroformed and robbed in the train between San Sebastian and Irun. I cannot imagine that my parents believed the tale, but it gave me some fame at the Upper Gardens Lawn Tennis Club, where I embroidered on it each time I told it at one of the Saturday afternoon teas. When it came to picking up the local shop girls for evening walks in Branksome Woods my notoriety as a traveller compensated for the facts that I was not good-looking and did not play hockey for my country, as did my father, or badminton for it, as did my mother. It was even more useful to me than my ability to walk considerable distances on my hands under water because one could bathe for so few months during the year.

As far as I can remember, I read no newspapers before the war except to see the cricket scores. August 1914 took me entirely by surprise. I knew and loved Germany, and could pay little attention to the rumours that she was preparing for war. There could not be war with people who had treated me so kindly!

It was a bank holiday, and I had been out with my father to fish at Ringwood. All day I had stood in the sunshine almost too fascinated by the behaviour of the red-topped float to notice the dragon-flies and the swallows and the moorhens. I was as completely and peacefully happy as I have ever been.

And in the evening, as we bicycled home, we found a large crowd of cheering people outside the *Daily Echo* office. There was to be a war with Germany. We should lick them off the face of the earth within three months.

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I cannot remember the important event of taking the King's shilling. It occurred some time in August and somewhere in Salisbury or Sherborne. We were not wanted immediately, for recruiting arrangements were not adequate for the supply of willing cannon fodder. Day after day, I sat on the hot sands at Branksome with two boys who subsequently won the Victoria Cross, although one of them died in the process (Woodroffe and Monty Moore), discussing whether there was any hope that we should get out to the Front before it was all over.

I joined up—for we were still such snobs that it was not done to fight by the side of men who were not of one's class—in an organisation called the University and Public Schools Battalion. We had no uniforms and only dummy rifles or old carbines, but our little cardboard badges showed that we were playing our part in the glorious struggle of civilisation against barbarism. And somebody called Margaret Cooper came down to Epsom and sang us a song about not wanting to lose us but thinking we ought to go, for our King and our Country both needed us so. Occasionally a fellow-platoonist who knew all about the Head-hunters of Peru would take me up to London for a breakfast of kidneys and bacon at the Royal Societies Club. Everybody and everything conspired to convince me that I was important. I had to try to forget that the Germans had ever been kind to me and to give up singing German songs in the bathroom of my billet. I must have been mistaken and misled in my judgment of these people who crucified soldiers and murdered children. Anyhow, I wasn't going to let any Boche rape my sister!

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Because I was a "gentleman" and had reached the exalted rank of Lance-Corporal in the school Officers Training Corps I was given a commission in the Dorsets. In preparation for this I had encouraged my moustache to grow. All I can remember of my interview with the Adjutant which turned me into an officer was his failure to see how much hair I had on my upper lip and his curt and humiliating order to me not to shave it any more.

I was more fortunate than most subalterns, for, after very few weeks at Battalion Headquarters, I was sent off in charge of coast patrol at Lulworth. Apart from one awkward moment when the Colonel himself came out to see us off and I suddenly discovered that I had no idea what order was necessary to get my detachment on its bicycles, I had as happy a month as any that had preceded it. I was entirely my own master. I had a charming billet in an old inn. Most of my sentries were London lads who had never before spent a night among the manifold noises of a country night, and they were so apt to blaze away that I almost crawled on my belly to visit them and we had a heavy bill for wounded cattle. But to reach them I had to climb over one of the most beautiful hills in Dorset and to come down to Warbarrow Bay, one of the most beautiful bays on the south coast. Once a week I went over on my motor bike to Swanage to collect the men's pay and came back with the thrilling expectation of a hold-up at each bit of moorland or lonely copse. And once a week, with my sword clanking at my side, I marched my men to the little church in the grounds of Lulworth Castle, and the local parson said special prayers about the

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gallant soldiers—us—who were fighting God's battle against the forces of evil.

This was *my* country. Other Bartletts or Bartelots had for generations looked on these hills and lowlands, had worked in these fields, drunk in these inns, put on their Sunday-best clothes to pray in these old stone-built churches. I have little sympathy for what most people call patriotism, with its absurd assumption that anything "foreign" must be inferior. Coming from the Norman part of Wessex, I am in many ways more closely related to the Normans across the Channel than to the men of Yorkshire or the Highlands of Scotland.

When a Frenchman talks of "*mon pays*" he may mean France, but the chances are that he means that very small section of it where his ancestors lie buried, his village, the copse where he did his wooing, the river where he goes fishing, the café where he plays his cards or his billiards when the day's work is over. For that he would fight. For the English equivalent of that I would fight, but this local patriotism, this love of simple existence in unpretentious places, encourages a respect for the other man's "*pays*". It is only when people begin to be proud of areas painted red, yellow, green or whatever it may be on a map that they become aggressive and acquisitive.

Before I went to the Front to fight for England, Great Britain, the Empire, Belgium, or whatever it was I was to defend, I had one short leave in London with my mother. On the last evening as we walked up Shaftesbury Avenue towards our modest Bloomsbury hotel, I had my first warning that war was a very serious business. I might never come back, she said,

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and she wanted me to know that I had been a good son, and I reminded her that, if this were true, the credit was not mine. But I lay awake that night thinking over the possibility of never coming back. Or the impossibility! Surely I, who enjoyed life so much, could not have it cut short?

I went through a period of that awful fear of being afraid. In my more cowardly moments I prayed to a God in whom I did not believe that, whatever happened to anybody else, I might be spared. It has since happened to me, in my more cowardly moments, to wish that I had not been.

A day or two after that last leave I received orders to go to France. The Adjutant became unexpectedly friendly and gave me my first cigar. The Weymouth-Southampton express was held up for five minutes so that I and a fellow-officer might not be delayed in serving our fatherland. I knew every mile of country between Weymouth and Southampton, but my sorrow over saying farewell to it all was cancelled by this proof of my importance.

CHAPTER IV

IN many ways I enjoyed being at the Front. One had so little time to be introspective. Mud, fatigues, trench mortars, parcels from home, and rifle fire—in that order—occupied so much of one's attention. Apart from the moments of acute terror the worst times, for me, were when we were back in billets, for I had been on so few battalion and brigade parades and was overwhelmed with the thought of the chaos I might cause by confusing left and right.

The greatest consolation of these periods of rest was that my major generally chose me as his companion on his trips to Bailleul because I knew a certain amount of French and he knew none. But even these excursions had terrors from which one was free in the trenches, for I had to ride Ginger, an immense horse with a mouth of steel, a temper of the devil and a gait which seldom kept time with my ups and downs on my saddle.

On one such excursion we were commissioned to bring back bottles of liqueur for the mess and a large new saucepan for the company cook. Just as we were about to mount outside the Hôtel du Faucon, my major handed me the saucepan for a moment while he shortened his stirrups. For that moment I slung it on its string round my neck, and kept it for an eternity. For it banged against one of the bottles in my saddle bag

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and made a noise to which Ginger was unaccustomed.

He started off at a gallop for home. I let go the saucepan in order to drag with both hands on the reins, and the noise of metal against glass drove Ginger to frenzied energy. I removed one hand from the reins to hold the saucepan and Ginger galloped all the faster. We raced across an open field towards the lane that led up over the Mont Noir.

And then I knew that I was lost, for the gate was closed and it was the sort of gate that brings down jockeys in the Grand National. I had never before jumped anything on horseback wider than a two-foot ditch.

Just before I reached the gate a man rode up from the other side and opened it. I scarcely had time to be grateful for this chivalry before I realised that it had not been opened for my benefit. Behind the trooper was a squadron, or whatever it is called, of cavalry. I dashed through the gateway just as a red-faced and white-moustached major appeared at it. His horse stood up on one hind-leg like a bronze horse carrying the statue of an eighteenth-century monarch. As I tore down between the two scattering ranks of cavalrymen I was pursued by a series of oaths from under that white-bristling moustache.

The hill rather than my own efforts ultimately brought Ginger to a standstill. When my major came up with me he found me mopping Benedictine from my puttees and breeches. And the mess was four bottles short.

The bombardments we experienced in the spring and summer of 1915 would, I suppose, have caused very little alarm to the men who went through the hells

CHAPTER IV

the munition makers and scientists were subsequently to produce. But there was one feature of them that was particularly unpleasant. We had such humiliating inferiority in armaments.

There was an elegant young gentleman known as the Brigade Trench Mortar Officer. A nice, but hated, man. He would arrive in my trench with a ridiculous little weapon that fired mortars weighing somewhere about fifteen pounds each. Half a dozen of these, despite our appeals to be left in peace, would be popped off in the direction of Germany and, by the time the Trench Mortar Officer was having his luncheon at Brigade Headquarters, the Germans were generally ready to reply.

There was a faint warning click. We gazed skywards in terror as a large black object shot upwards and then began to fall towards us, turning and twisting ludicrously. Nobody could tell where it would fall, so that we ran up or down our trench under the absurd impulse that makes a man in danger believe that he would be safer anywhere than where he is. We came near to fighting in the narrow trench as we all tried to get round the traverses that might cut us off from that two-hundred pound mass of high explosive.

Apart from the trench mortar, we could only answer back with a large catapult which was propped up against the parapet and which, when the elastic was released, often overbalanced and sent the jam-tin bomb rolling along our own trench instead of skimming over to the Germans.

And German soldiers were able to show themselves above the parapet in broad daylight, for the only sniper's

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loop-hole plates were made of such thin steel that bullets pierced them with ease and made a terrible mess of anybody standing on the other side of them. Only at night could we obtain any idea of the land east of our own part of Belgium; and the business of creeping into No Man's Land to draw a map of the enemy trenches was presumably a fairly risky one. The only time I did it I recovered the thrill I had known on my explorations as a small boy and was not frightened as I was when we were shelled on our way to the trenches.

* * *

At that stage of the war one might spend months in the front line and never be involved in an attack. We sat in our trenches and were shelled (often by our own gunners, for the quality of the munitions was very irregular) or fired at by German infantrymen a few hundred yards further up the field across which our trench was dug. Some incompetent fool at headquarters had decided we must have no real dug-outs lest we should all be sitting comfortably in them when the enemy attacked and so should be unable to save him from danger. We had, therefore, no protection beyond one layer of sandbags and a waterproof sheet, and nearly all our casualties were due to this piece of idiocy. Our job was to sit there idle until something hit us.

On one occasion I was determined to show some initiative. A lot of Welsh miners had been drafted to our battalion and I encouraged some of them to burrow a hole underneath our parapet so that we might have a concealed sniping and observation post in No Man's

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Land. We worked at it for days and one morning I lay in it as dawn lit up the sky behind the German lines and showed me a land that I had never seen before by daylight except for fleeting moments through a periscope.

I pushed aside a few stalks of corn and uprooted one cornflower which blocked my view. Within forty yards were the German sandbags and I could see into a communication trench that led back to the reserve line over the brow of Hill 60. The enemy were so accustomed to wandering around as they liked during the day that I could watch men going back and forth as though they were in no more danger than they would be in Berlin or Munich.

My sergeant quietly put a rifle into my hands. I was to have first shot. I aimed at the communication trench and waited. I remembered how, a few months before at Lulworth on my way home from visiting my sentries, I had lain in a copse before dawn and had strained my eyes to see the first pheasants fluttering down from their roosting branches into the field. I could have obtained all the regular shooting I wanted, but this poaching had been so much more exciting. It was difficult enough to distinguish the slightly darker grey of the birds against the grey of the sky, and if I missed once I had no further chance that morning. Now, on Hill 60 as I waited for my first German I knew the same taut, exhilarating excitement.

He came down the trench towards me. He had obviously been back somewhere to wash, for he was naked to the waist and was carrying a towel. I aimed at his heart.

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At the very last second I deliberately altered my aim. The man was so comfortably fat, so defenceless, so unsuspecting. I pulled the trigger and hit him in the left arm and I hope, whenever I think of him, that I gave him a nice "cushy" wound that took him home for a few weeks of happiness before the inexorable machine caught him up again and thrust him back in the front line. He was, as far as I know, the only man I ever hit, and my conscience about him would be more at ease if I were convinced that I should not have fired to kill had he happened to be wearing his tunic.

My sergeant was overheard telling somebody that I was a very bad shot. The next day a staff officer came round on a tour of inspection and ordered us to fill in the sniper's tunnel. It was, he said, "too dangerous" and I dared not ask him what he meant. For the rest of my time at the front I carefully avoided any initiative and concentrated on sending in the right number of returns at the right times. I was therefore considered to be quite a competent and trustworthy person to hold His Majesty's Commission.

* * *

I wonder sometimes how competent I was. At the age of twenty-one I had the responsibility for the lives of a couple of hundred men. On the one hand, the people upon whom I, in turn, depended discouraged dangerous initiatives and on occasions gave me fatherly advice and help, but, on the other, they had such a passion for unintelligent discipline that one sometimes concluded it was more important to see that Private X had his hair cut than that adequate precautions were

CHAPTER IV

taken for his safety. And if the war taught me anything at all it taught me to wonder how people who called themselves Socialists would more readily vote estimates for a professional army than do so for a conscript one.

I, with my complete ignorance of military matters, but with my public school accent, was, in the opinion no doubt of the men themselves, a better officer than someone who had risen from the non-commissioned ranks. My sergeant who whispered my orders to me on the parade ground so that I might not make a fool of myself was probably not jealous of my higher pay and position. For I was what is called a "gentleman" and it was right that I should have certain advantages quite unconnected with merit.

One of the great reasons why France is a really democratic country, in the sense that there are virtually no class distinctions based on birth, is that she has a conscript army. The British Army is based on a tradition which assures the maintenance of the public school and Woolwich-Sandhurst ideal. Not the officers alone, but the men of the rank and file, would obviously prefer Fascism to Socialism if that choice had to be made. But the man who argues that an army, if one is necessary at all, should be conscripted is himself accused of Fascism.

There was, during those difficult weeks on or near Hill 60, one ranker officer who was drafted to my company. I was twenty-one and he was forty-two. He had spent several years in the army and several more bossing natives about somewhere in West Africa, and he was the most hated man I have ever known. He hated me because I was in command of the company

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while he was a second-lieutenant, and I hated him because he undermined my discipline. Our nerves were stretched like violin strings, for we had been so long without a spell in rest huts, and our rivalry became an obsession—more so with him than with me, because I sympathised sincerely with him in his unwillingness to be bossed around by a boy exactly half his age.

One night I was going round the trenches. Jackson's platoon and another were in the front line, with the other two platoons in support. There was an unwritten rule that the subaltern should always be with his men in the front line, but Jackson was not to be found. He had gone back, they told me, to the support trenches an hour ago. I found him snoring in a dug-out, and damned him into angry wakefulness. He was at once to return to his post and to stay there I ordered, and I waited to see that he did so.

When he had got his belt buckled I set out ahead of him along the communication trench. Half-way down it I was suddenly impelled to look round and, just as I did so, Jackson was drawing his revolver from its holster. I *knew* he was determined to shoot me.

For the first time in my life I collared a man as low as any "rugger" coach could have desired—fear rather than courage drove me to it. We crashed in the trench and were struggling for the revolver when a sergeant and a couple of men came along. I got up in a shame-faced way. It was too late to patch things up, to keep things quiet, so I went down to Battalion Headquarters and told Kestell-Cornish, the Adjutant, all about it.

Kestell-Cornish was, I believe, no older than I was, but there could have been few more gallant, cheerful

CHAPTER IV

and well-balanced officers. He went out again and again to the front until at last the mathematical chances against him were too great and he was killed. I can remember vividly going into the headquarters dug-out in the larch wood by the railway cutting, making my report to the Colonel and Kestell-Cornish, and, to my immense relief, receiving the immediate and whole-hearted understanding of a man whose good opinion I valued more than that of anybody else I knew.

Poor Jackson was placed under arrest, but managed to shoot himself in the foot. He went down the line to hospital, to the joy of everybody who wished a court-martial to be avoided. I was told later that he was transferred to some other regiment and was shot by mistake when he was patrolling in No Man's Land.

And fourteen years later, when I came out of a broadcasting studio after a talk, I was called to the telephone. Jackson was there explaining that he had just returned from some unsuccessful job in some remote colony, that he had recognised my voice, and that he had always wanted to apologise for an unfortunate incident many years before. I asked him out to lunch and he sat down opposite me in the old Savage Club in Adelphi Terrace. Then we went into the bar and drank brandies with a bunch of other men who never knew that I had once provoked my guest into an attempt to murder me.

* * *

We returned one day at dawn to billets at Kruisstraat, just south of Ypres. For seventeen days we had never been more than three hundred yards from the

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German lines on or near Hill 60; the second Battle of Ypres had swallowed every battalion which should have relieved us. I have never been more tired before or since, and I must have passed through acute moments of fear, for no such bombardment had taken place since the outbreak of war. But my only vivid memory of that period is one of anger because, half an hour after a colleague and I had finished building a dug-out which had the luxury of windows from a farm behind the lines, somebody sprang a mine in the next trench and shook the whole thing down.

We had not been two hours in billets when I was aroused by marching over the cobbles outside. The Lahore Division was coming through from the south to prevent the line from breaking. One of my dearest friends was attached to it and I lifted my weary head from a pillow, which consisted of a large bundle of clothes including a corset, in the hope that I might see him march by.

While I was waiting out in the street a shell burst a few yards away. I was hit by small splinters on the head, hand and thigh. I should have been far more seriously damaged had I fallen down a suburban staircase, but the Medical Officer was taking no risks. There might still be a splinter in me. I must go down the line until I could find somebody to X-ray me.

At about the time when I was standing in a row of wounded soldiers while an orderly tried to thrust a blunt anti-tetanus needle into my chest, the order reached the battalion I had just left that it was to go up the line again. Poison gas had been used for the first time against a British regiment, and naturally

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enough, that regiment had retired. We had to go to take its place.

I of course knew nothing of all this. I spent my twenty-first birthday in a hospital train on my way to Rouen, the nearest place where a wound like mine could be dealt with. The Medical Officer in charge of the train was an old school friend. He took me along to his saloon and he and the nurses celebrated my birthday by opening a bottle of champagne. I began to think that after all life had its good points. I thought so until he poured out in my glass an inch of champagne and explained that I must have no more because I was a wounded man. He then proceeded to share the rest of the bottle between himself and the nurses.

Down at the base rumours came through about the disaster that had befallen my battalion. Within a week I went up the line again at the head of a detachment of Cameron Highlanders. Only one of them, the sergeant, was intelligible. All of them were six foot or so. Wherever we had to march—and to get to the station at Rouen we had to march four miles—I trotted in an undignified way at the head of this swinging column. It was too humiliating and I was heartily glad to leave them somewhere near La Bassée.

When I got back to the neighbourhood of Hill 60, I found myself a company commander; there was nobody else left. Nearly all my friends had been killed or wounded while I was away having a pleasant time in a hospital ward at Rouen with flowers on every table. Three out of the four platoon commanders in my company had been killed, including the man who had taken over my own platoon. The morning of my

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return my sergeant was sniped through the head as he was showing me around the trenches we had taken over. The back of his skull was blown out as he was talking to me. He had been with me in camp near Weymouth in the autumn of 1914 before either of us went to the Front. I liked him better than most people because he knew my weaknesses and forgave them. He knew just how frightened I was at different times.

We put him on a stretcher and carried him back with a waterproof sheet over him to an unused bit of trench until night would allow us to bury him. During the day—a lovely sunny spring day when one or two misguided birds chirped among the broken larches around us—I went back to see my sergeant. Some beastly curiosity got hold of me. I drew back the merciful waterproof sheet. The broken skull looked like pieces of cocoanut, the brains were scattered all over the place. I turned away and was horribly sick. But I think it was from that moment that I decided I must do what little I could to prevent another war. For the Acts of God one could not be responsible. But this sudden change from strong, cheerful, courageous manhood to a thing which was part comic and part obscene was an Act of Man. Somehow that sort of thing must be ended.

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IT was a lamentably wet night in 1916. I had just finished with my share in the war and was writing indifferent verse and trying to find out, from the *Writers' and Artists' Year Book*, how and where to sell unsellable stories. Some of the verse appeared in a local paper and brought me neither cash nor kudos. None of the stories has ever appeared anywhere.

My father came into the room in his waterproof coat. One of the clerks had forgotten to send a most important letter and he must take it himself. I volunteered to go instead and was rewarded, for the letter was addressed to a well-known and successful author, Max Pemberton. I got my bicycle out of the shed and rattled through the rain to Canford Cliffs in a great state of elation and awe. Elated because I was at last to meet a famous writer, but awed because I did not know whether I should find the courage to tell him I had ambitions to become one myself.

I have not seen Max Pemberton for twenty years, but I have not forgotten his kindness. Heaven knows what immature material I sent him, but he read it all through and gave me invaluable advice. He sent me up to London to see the literary editor of the *Daily Mirror*, whose change from a terrifying individual who could decide my career into that lovable and friendly

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writer, Herbert Farjeon, should have taught me once and for all how relative is truth. In due course a few articles on mud, batmen, barbed wire and other military matters appeared in print, and I still remember vividly my mingled pride and anger when my dog, Monty, came across a sheet of newspaper lying on the ground and used it for his own purposes—pride because one of my own masterpieces should be left lying around like that, and anger because Monty should not realise this was a very special piece of newspaper, which ought not to be submitted to such a supreme indignity.

Max Pemberton's kindness did not end with the writing of one letter of introduction (and one charming foreword to a very bad book of verse which never reached anybody except a few people to whom my Mother gave it at Christmas time, and towards the publication of which, gullible as I was, I paid up a precious ten pounds of my wound gratuity). After advising me to keep out of the writing business—every author and journalist gave me this advice and would have been amazed had I followed it—he sent me to one editor who sent me to another who sent me to a third. And here I sat in a small room in the offices of the *Daily Mail* while the editor-in-chief, Tom Marlowe himself, offered me a job on the reporting staff at three pounds a week.

All I had ever earned before, except during the miraculous period when I was given fabulous sums for swaggering about in an officer's uniform, had been the thirty marks a week when I taught English in the language school in Berlin. And here I was with a salary of three pounds and a job which would bring

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my writings before a million people a day!

In the first week, as far as I can remember, I had eight lines in the paper. My very first job of research on behalf of the great British public took me to Rochester on a very depressing murder story. A girl's body had been found in some woods, and with the man who was supposed to be teaching me my job I crawled around in the undergrowth looking for clues. That part of it was tolerable although the girl had been dead for some weeks. The order to interview the girl's mother was intolerable but was, nevertheless, obeyed.

In the reporters' room were two elderly men who showed me considerable kindness for reasons that were not altogether disinterested. Each of them had been the hero of one big journalistic story and wanted to tell me all about it. God knows for how many years they had worked on the reporting staffs of Fleet Street. The thought of them used to haunt me at night—perhaps the time would come when I should hunt for some new cub reporter who would listen eagerly or politely while I told him of my one great scoop. I would arrive next morning at the office with so many new suggested futilities for filling up the paper that the news editor must have begun to think I showed promise after all. Having attempted to carry out my futile enquiries I would, at times, retire to the lavatory and lock myself in so that I could weep undisturbed.

There were moments of mildly compensating fame. For a few glorious weeks I was "pet dog" editor. At that stage of the war there was talk of doing away with pets in order to economise food supplies, and every

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day came some hundred and twenty letters, from which I had to concoct pathetic arguments in favour of pets and stern, patriotic ones against them. My half column became more popular—or so I used to think—than anything else in the paper, and my pride would have become unbearable had the News Editor not sent me one day to discover the price of potatoes at Covent Garden.

The market, I found, was a terrifying place. Everybody seemed too busy to talk to me, and nobody looked as though he would appreciate the accusation of profiteering that was implied in any question about the price of potatoes. Still, it had to be done, and, picking a man of relatively jovial appearance, I asked him boldly the fateful question, telling him I was a newspaper reporter.

Before I knew what was happening, he had clutched me violently by the lapel of my coat. I have forgotten exactly what he said to me, but the gist of it was that he did not like reporters, that there were over one hundred different sorts of potato, and that he might answer me when I could tell him the name of the potatoes that interested my paper most. In some alarm, I suggested that we should continue our conversation in the nearest public-house, and I found the human side of my potato merchant. In half an hour he told me more about potatoes than I had ever heard before, and cost me a considerable fraction of my week's salary. But I forgot to find out the price.

And then there was the day when I was sent round London to find out what shopkeepers thought of the proposed regulation for the compulsory closing of all

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shops at 7 P.M., to save lighting. Early closing affected them all intimately and the *Daily Mail* was perfectly willing to use its influence to help them, but I found that it is never pleasant to mind other people's business. In almost every case the salesman was so much affected that he turned on me as though I were the government, and argued violently against propositions I had never even thought of putting forward. After a most depressing day I was told abruptly and unpleasantly by a newsagent of Lillie Road, Fulham, to go to hell. The newsagent was an old man, and I noticed he had one gouty foot propped up on a chair and I was tired and cross. So I took a mean advantage of him and told him exactly what I thought of him and of his lack of civility.

And during my peroration two large, muscular-looking privates entered the shop, and addressed the old man as "Dad". "Dad" began explaining to his sons that he did not like me and that he liked still less the paper I represented. Things began to look decidedly unpleasant. I edged towards the door and, with the remark that I must get back to my office, I slid into the street. Herbert, I noticed, was looking very vicious, and his younger brother could have killed an ox with his fist. Three or four oxen, perhaps. I walked with outward dignity and inward trepidation as far as the corner of the street, and as I turned into Strode Road I glanced back. Herbert had just stepped out of the shop and his brother was in the doorway. They appeared to be discussing what are now known as "sanctions". As soon as I was out of sight I ran as hard as I could up Strode Road to the nearest omni-

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bus. You might have done the same had you seen Herbert.

Nevertheless, I am almost as grateful for those few months as for any that have had to do with hard work. For one thing they taught me a very little about the presentation of news. For another, they put me in touch with experienced newspaper men who were far kinder and more helpful than I had any right to expect. For another, they turned me towards authorship.

Having served in the war, I was selected to interview men who came home wounded from the Front. Whenever there was a severe battle I would have to go off to some hospital to pick up all the details I could from poor devils who had just returned from it. On one excuse or another, I had to get into those long wards with their stink of anaesthetics and to persuade men to tell me about the one subject they wanted to forget. Then I had to elaborate my material, to write it up until the readers could feel what a magnificent thing war was after all. It was a filthy job—only a little better than that of hounding the last few people of German origin into concentration camps which was the job of my neighbour in the reporters' room—and I soon discovered that I could not do it. So one day, after I had tried and failed to get some details out of South African soldiers in a hospital in Richmond Park, I sat down in the bracken and, with the help of a map and the official communiques, invented my first stories from the Front.

It was not so very difficult to do, for details must, in any case, be left vague lest the censor be incensed. The little heroisms I described might have taken place at

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any time in any regiment. I left the *Daily Mail* without regrets but with a good deal of material which later became one of the most sentimental and abominable of all books of war sketches. I advertised it as best I could in the train to and from the office by reading it—although I knew it off by heart—and appearing to be enthralled by it.

* * *

The man who had crawled around with me in a wood on the Rochester murder story had meanwhile gone to Reuter's Agency—on his roundabout way to be the tennis correspondent of a big London daily paper, and now, I believe, a theosophist. For some reason he persuaded Reuter's to offer me a job. I found myself assistant to the diplomatic representative, which was not nearly so important a job as it sounds. While my chief went round to the Foreign Office, the Embassies and the Legations to collect whatever news was going, I had to pick up the scraps. There was, for example, the Minister of Haiti, whom I ran to earth in a small hotel behind Victoria Station on the day when his country broke off diplomatic relations with Germany. He drew so convincing a picture of the devastating effect this step would have on Germany that I still recollect the sense of personal guilt with which I handed over to him the few lines that the British Press devoted to my interview with him.

There was, again, a short newspaper paragraph which announced that Dr. Trumbich, the Croat leader, had arrived in London. What a Croat was I did not know, but nor did anybody else in the office. I talked to him

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for an hour in the Strand Palace Hotel and hoped he would not realise that, for the first ten minutes, I did not even know what part of Europe he was discussing. Through this severe-looking revolutionary I came into touch with others who were doing their best to break up the Austro-Hungarian Empire. There was a Czech, Vladimir Nosek, who has since become one of my best friends, in charge of a small office in the Strand. Between us we filled scores of columns in the British Press—he because he was a fervent patriot and I because I was delighted to find a fruitful source of information. Without knowing it, I became quite a valuable friend of Czechoslovakia and have always been treated in that country with more courtesy than I deserve.

But often there would be no news available and I would have to go farther afield. Some of the small Latin-American republics were not at war with Germany, and I would hunt up their addresses in the telephone book and go off to West Kensington to see if the number of the Allies was shortly to be increased. Frequently I returned with no information, for I would be met by an eager landlady who would tell me that the Ruritanian legation was no longer there but she would like to know where it was so that she might get her bills paid.

* * *

It was not always easy to pay my own bills, for I was a very sick man and only the fact that most other young men were still at the front enabled me to keep my job at all. I lived, until my marriage, in a nasty bed sitting-room, in Werter Road, Putney, where my only

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consolations were, one, that Goethe had written about the man after whom my street was named, and, two, that the hero of Arnold Bennett's *Buried Alive* had also lived there. After my marriage we lived in Gerrard's Cross in a small house with old oak beams made of stained deal and a garden of such solid clay that the only gardener who could be found to put it in order broke his spade within half an hour of his arrival and could never be persuaded to return. I grew in it a few diseased potatoes. Mice ate the peas, and the day before I planned to pick the dozen plums on our only plum tree, an errand boy stole the lot. On Saturday afternoons I ate sandwiches surreptitiously in the train and got home at about three. Until five or later my wife stood in one food queue and I in another. There was always difficulty about the meat tickets because I seemed to spend more than my share at lunch in the City.

Despite the prevailing scarcity of man power in offices I doubt if I should have kept going for long in these conditions had it not been for F. W. Dickinson, the Chief Editor of Reuter's and the finest gentleman I ever met. On the excuse that I could help him with secretarial work when I was not going my rounds he brought me down from the rush and row of the sub-editor's room to his own office. And whenever he noticed that I was ill he would find some reason for sending me home for a couple of days—there was some report to be prepared or some batch of German newspapers to be studied.

Under Dickinson's care—and I wish he were alive so that he might read my small tribute to him—I

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gradually improved in health. Or rather, I got no worse physically and I developed a new interest which helped me mentally. I "went Labour", for it seemed to me that the Labour Party included the only people who had a sane outlook about the future. My interest had been aroused while I was still on the *Daily Mail*. I had been sent down to the Party offices in Victoria Street to ask some question about the Stockholm Conference. I was probably the twentieth newspaper reporter who had been there on the same errand that day, and the Assistant Secretary—now the Secretary—was tired and overworked; he had had enough of it. I know few more benevolent-looking men than J. S. Middleton, but he suddenly became very fierce. Striding across to the door, he locked it, put the key in his pocket and, for a quarter of an hour, told me in the bluntest English what he thought of journalists who asked fatuous questions about matters they did not understand. I tried to point out that no man who had such a variety of assignments during a day as a newspaper reporter could possibly be an expert on them all, but Middleton was determined to say his say. Having done so, he unlocked the door with a smile of apology, and I went away determined to find out more about the Labour Party.

The result was that, when energy slowly returned to me, I produced a magnificent memorandum in which I argued that unless Reuter's paid far more attention to the "Left" in politics it would no longer be looked upon as the official news agency after the revolution—and nearly everybody was convinced at that time that revolution was coming. Therefore should I not con-

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centrate on these Labour and Trade Union organisations and their dealings with other countries?

Sir Roderick Jones, Managing Director of Reuter's, agreed and gave me an increase of salary. (My other increase came when an attack on the Ministry of Information of which Sir Roderick was one of the heads, appeared in the *Westminster Gazette* over the name "Vernon Bartlet". Sir Roderick, failing to notice the absence of a third "t" and forgetting the existence of a distinguished theologian at Oxford, Dr. Vernon Bartlet, told me I was sacked, refused to listen to my denials, apologised handsomely when he finally realised he had been mistaken and increased my salary a day or two afterwards by another thirty shillings a week.

* * *

We are an unexpectedly large band, we Vernon Bartletts, or Bartlets. The most famous is the learned doctor who thus unknowingly earned me more money and who has subsequently got me into minor difficulties. When members of my club scowl at me I realise that he has made some public declaration against the disgusting habit of smoking. When clergymen treat me with great deference I suspect that he has written another letter to *The Times* on some religious subject. Once, when I was accused of the vilest hypocrisy, I was able to prove that the Vernon Bartlet who seemed to support Mussolini in his Abyssinian campaign was not the Vernon Bartlett who was day after day attacking Mussolini in the *News Chronicle*.

But there are others of us. One is, I believe, a business man who, I suspect, does not believe very

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much in the League of Nations and all the rest of it. Time after time he cheerfully opens some envelope only to discover that it contains a sentimental letter intended for me and saying how splendid it would be if we could all be friends with these nice kind foreigners! Courteously he forwards them to me, and I can only hope that this book will not add to the number of these periodical little annoyances.

And then, when I was still broadcasting, somebody rang me up to congratulate me. I was delighted—he must have read a book of short stories I had recently published. But he went on to ask if my wife was doing well, and that left me puzzled. I looked at the Births, Marriages and Deaths list in *The Times*, and discovered that a Mrs Vernon Bartlett had had a baby. I telephoned to my wife and she knew nothing about it, but the Talks Department of the B.B.C. sent us a magnificent bunch of roses which, I am a little ashamed to say, we kept.

There is at least one more of us—a man down in Devonshire. To all of them I take this opportunity of apologising for any complications I brought into their existence during my broadcasting days.

* * *

Encouraged by Reuter's to keep in touch with the political Left, I had the least unhappy time I had known since I was invalided out of the army. There was always a welcome for me at the Labour Party's luncheon table in the Pillar Hall Café under Victoria Station, and there was generally good company. Arthur Henderson, pompously sensitive to newspaper

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criticism, but honest, kind and lovable; Arthur Greenwood whom I liked better than any of the other "big noises" there; G. D. H. Cole whom I best remember as my unexpected companion one night at the Victoria Palace when we shouted the chorus of a song called "Once aboard the lugger and the girl is mine"; Camille Huysmans, Secretary of the Second International, whom my Belgian relations considered a dangerous traitor but whose nationalist feelings were so near the surface that we once would not speak to each other for days because of a row over the British and Belgian methods of displaying meat in butchers' shops; and always that excellent trio, Will Henderson, James Middleton and Herbert Tracey, and Willie Gillies who had not then learnt to hate me in the belief that I am a Fascist and whom I could never learn to hate. My crowning moment as a Labour correspondent came one morning when Kerensky, just out of Russia, unexpectedly appeared on the platform at a congress and enthusiastically kissed an embarrassed and blushing "Uncle" Arthur Henderson on both cheeks.

Occasionally I would vary my existence by attending, on Reuter's behalf, some official banquet given to an important foreigner to persuade him to make greater efforts to secure a British victory. I remember Lloyd George telling that benevolent-looking old scoundrel, Nicholas Pasitch, of Serbia, that any nation could sing of its victories but only a great one could sing of its defeats. I have since seen Lloyd George in many different circumstances. I have sat alone with him in his charming house at Churt and listened, while we both sipped mead, as he told the most magnificently

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malicious anecdotes about the great men of the day. I have met him in a narrow lane at Genoa when Wickham Steed and I in one car turned our eyes one way while he and Sir Edward Grigg, in another car, turned their eyes the other and our two chauffeurs tried to extricate themselves from a situation which almost compelled the Prime Minister of Great Britain to exchange words—if only insulting words—with the editor of *The Times* newspaper. But I have never liked him more than on that day when he, as the representative of one little nation, Wales, greeted Pasitch as the representative of another, Serbia.

And yet I used, on such occasions, to go through the most terrible temptation. My newspaper colleagues and I were quite definitely in need of good food and good drink. They could afford to do themselves well. But I knew no shorthand and I did know that one more drink would make me so happy or one more mouthful of food would make me so sleepy that I should not be able to produce a satisfactory summary of the speeches for my agency.

* * *

But even with such occasional binges and with the increases of salary from Reuter's, I was beginning to realise the importance of money. I therefore planned to get more of it. For a fortnight, with the help of a letter of introduction from Herbert Farjeon (who had already taught me the technique of inventing jokes for the "Nuts and Wine" page of the *Sunday Pictorial* at half a crown a time) I became a literary "ghost".

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During my precious Saturday afternoons I was to interview famous actors or actresses, write up their stories in the form of articles, and get them to sign these masterpieces as though they had written them themselves. They were then to be published in a theatrical paper and I was to get a cheque for three guineas.

The first victim was an actress who was so hard-faced and—to me—repulsive that I cannot give any hint as to her identity. She received me in her dressing-room, where were four or five elegant young men who apparently did not share my feelings about her. They were so damned supercilious and I was so unused to seeing women in their underclothes, at any rate with other men about the place, that I asked the stupidest questions and failed to hear most of the replies. Besides, she only gave the Christian names of all the actors and actresses she mentioned, and my knowledge of the theatre was so slight that I could not identify more than one in five of them. I wrote up the interview as best I could, sent it to her to sign, and was not very surprised to hear nothing further from her. One week-end wasted.

The second experiment seemed more promising. I had to interview a famous low comedian, who called me "old man" and insisted on my drinking neat whiskey in large quantities. He practically wrote my article for me, and I left his theatre in a great state of alcoholic elation to type it out. I posted it to him on Monday, and on the evening of that day he was forcibly retired to a nursing home with delirium tremens. Another week-end wasted. The paper, having waited

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twice for the results of my "ghosting", turned elsewhere for its copy.

Some years later, while I was working in Berlin, I made one more attempt at theatrical journalism. I was asked to write an article on the German stage for a very respectable British paper, and was delighted with the demand. At my own expense—for I have never had the nerve to present my card at the box office with a request for seats—I went to half the shows in town. And no article was ever more carefully polished and repolished. When it came back in print I compared the type-written and printed versions with great care. One word, I discovered, had been added by a cautious sub-editor. I had explained how the crisis in the German theatre was due to the way in which the wealth that remained after the war had changed hands. "The people who have money today", I declared, "are interested less in serious drama than in the *Nachtlöke* with their sweet champagne and their alluring advertisements of naked dancers." Before "naked" the sub-editor had put in the word "almost".

Despite the time I had to devote to standing in food queues or finding methods of increasing my income, I was still determined to be a great writer. In tubes, trains and buses, and in the evening when I returned home, I worked at a novel about the Latin Quarter which was a revolting imitation of W. J. Locke's *Beloved Vagabond*. It was going to make our fortune, and I rewrote it twice in my own handwriting and then spent a week's pay on having it typed. It now lies in a drawer along with a number of other papers I cannot persuade myself to destroy. But, like the Indian who

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found it worth while to put "failed B.A." on his visiting card, I obtained a certain amount of credit from the fact that I had written a novel, even though nobody would publish it.

It brought me an admirer—a young man who travelled with me sometimes to London, and who, instead of reading the great law volume he carried with him, used to talk about his soul in a high-pitched voice in a railway carriage filled with business men. With my usual cowardice, I would try to change the subject to something more decent and decorous, but young Van Druten was proud of having a soul and reading poetry, and was not to be distracted by remarks about the weather.

I believe the first poem he ever had in print was written about a visit to my study when I was abroad at the Peace Conference, and bibliophiles who can obtain copies of a little monthly paper called *The English Herald Abroad* which I helped to edit in Montreux will find most of the book reviews and a few pieces of dramatic criticism signed by Van Druten. He never received more than a few shillings for them, but a good many box offices, knowing nothing of our circulation, gave him free seats from which he could learn how to avoid the mistakes of his contemporaries when he pushed aside his law books and became a dramatist.

* * *

The enthusiasm of 1914 was replaced by the desperate weariness of 1918. One glanced down the casualty lists as one now glances through the Births, Marriages and Deaths columns of *The Times*. As the disillusion

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grew I began to take life very seriously. Now that I was vaguely mixed up with foreign politics, through Reuter's Agency, and with domestic politics, through the Labour Party, I discovered that I had to reform the world, or, at any rate, to take some part in its reformation. I was still in miserable health. In August 1918 I weighed nine stone something, and a little card I found recently among a lot of old papers assured me, on the unimpeachable authority of an Ostend slot-machine, that by August 1921 I weighed over twelve.

The war was drawing towards its muddy and unromantic close. Each day I went to a temporary government office on the Embankment where the Duke of Northumberland, in some smart uniform, lectured to a group of journalists and put a few flags first a little farther westwards on the wall-map to show the progress of the German March offensive, and then a little farther eastwards to show how the Allies were advancing. But I felt that the chance of making a real peace had already been lost, and I no longer believed, as most of my acquaintances appeared to believe, that the mere cessation of fighting was going to give us that country "fit for heroes to live in" which Mr Lloyd George and others promised us. I had seen enough of "propaganda" to realise how much it meant the distortion of the truth. I had very little confidence left in the motives and the omniscience of our rulers. The naïve, careless, lazy days by the river or on the beach were four years behind me by the calendar but a generation in disillusionment.

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EARLY one morning they told me at the office that the Armistice was to be signed. On that day at any rate all one's hopes revived. Shortly before eleven o'clock I climbed on to the top of a bus at the Bank and by the time we had got half-way down the Strand the maroons went off. I knew what they meant, but it took perhaps sixty seconds before the people around me realised that this was not another air-raid warning but the signal that firing had ceased all over the world. Never have I known, never shall I know, sixty more exciting seconds. From the windows of the Hotel Cecil, then part of the Air Ministry, hysterical typists showered down upon us thousands of sheets of paper, letters, envelopes and memoranda marked secret and strictly confidential—or whatever the proper phrase in the Air Ministry may be. But most vivid of all in my mind was an old lady who also sat on the top of my bus and wept contentedly all the way down Whitehall and Victoria. It was the one day, the only day, when there was no hatred.

By the time the delegates met in Paris the atmosphere had changed. The Khaki election had taken place, with all its promises to hang the Kaiser and to squeeze Germany as one squeezes a lemon. President Wilson had received a stupendous welcome in Europe,

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but already one was beginning to realise that self-interest had a good deal to do with the enthusiasm. In Rome they had offered him a great ink-stand of solid gold representing Romulus, Remus and the wolf. But thousands of Italians are supposed to have signed a demand that he should return this ink-stand when it became clear he was not going to support their claim to Fiume. The French did their share of flattering by entertaining the President at a luncheon at the Senate in a hall where no other foreigner had been entertained for a century. It was a most distinguished luncheon, but I was there.

Reuter's—or rather, F.W. Dickinson—had chosen me as one of the Agency's four correspondents at the Peace Conference, and when the invitation came to be represented at this Senate luncheon it turned out that I must go to it, although I was so much the youngest of the four, because I, alone, had a morning coat and top hat. I arrived in a rattling taxi-cab at the Palais de Luxembourg and found a large crowd of onlookers, who seemed to take more interest in me than in anybody else—I was so terribly young. In vain I wished I had a moustache or a large stomach, or some other physical attribute which would make me look like a person who ought to lunch at the Senate with the President of the United States. But I was only twenty-four and had no chance of hiding the fact.

At the door a man in evening dress with a big sash, velvet breeches and white stockings refused me admission. I produced my invitation but he insisted that it was a mistake. No journalists were invited. My nerve, already shaken, began to fail me. If I turned back

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my Agency would miss my report of speeches that would be of the greatest importance. If I did manage to get inside I might find that there really had been some mistake and be ignominiously thrown out.

Other cars were driving up behind and their pompous passengers were fuming in their impatience to get their feet on the red carpet. At last, after consultation with other officials, I was allowed inside. Now, I thought, my troubles were over.

They were not. They were just beginning. I found myself at the bottom of an enormous red staircase far longer, it seemed to me, than Jacob's ladder could have been. On each side of each step stood a Republican Guard with a drawn sabre. And grouped around the top of the staircase I saw nearly all the famous politicians of France. I recognised the faces of dozens who were familiar to readers of the illustrated papers.

I could scarcely have been more than half the age of any other person in the place and I was therefore painfully conspicuous. But I could not turn round and leave the building, for I should again have to face the unpleasant official and the crowd. I must go through with it. Slowly I began to mount that awful staircase.

I heard other steps behind me. Someone else was coming up the stairs. I was saved. I slowed down in order to let this new guest catch me up so that I should no longer feel so lonely and ridiculous. He came level with me, puffing noisily. Now I was all right. I had a companion. I regulated my speed to his and mounted the staircase with him. Only when we were almost at the top did I dare to glance at him.

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Clemenceau and I were going up the stairs together.

* * *

One thing I learned at that Peace Conference was that war is a futility since no decent peace can ever be drawn up after one. It is asking much too much of human nature to expect that the moment an armistice is signed all the hatred, the campaign of lies, with which your people have been persuaded to put up with the sacrifice involved by war, can disappear. They do not disappear. For years the effect of that campaign of propaganda continues. It vitiates the atmosphere of any peace conference to such an extent that the delegates to it inevitably and invariably sow the seeds of a future war.

And consequently I developed a healthy and ineradicable hatred of propaganda second only to my hatred of war itself. The poorest countries, I discovered, gave the most luxurious and magnificent banquets. I know that my judgment of Poland and Hungary, for example, was unduly harsh because of the sums the governments of those two countries have spent on influencing foreign public opinion in their favour. When I arrived at the Peace Conference I was so thin and ill that a letter I have since seen from one friend to another expresses the doubt whether I had long to live. At the expense of the Polish people I ate tremendous dinners which altered my outlook and my outline. But I was so obviously not invited for my wit or my beautiful eyes that my vanity was offended even though my appetite was gratified.

It is an amazing thing that those countries which

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devote most time and money to propaganda have learnt so little of the art of presentation. A Swedish banker once remarked to a friend of mine that an Englishman's highest form of praise is: "That's not too bad". But no government wishing to influence British public opinion ever remembers the important fact that the Englishman flatly refuses to believe in the perfection of any other form or system than his own. Years ago I went with my friend and colleague, Gerald Barry, for a quiet holiday to Poland. From the moment we arrived at the station in Warsaw we were raced around in a car to be shown all the sights of the city, when our one ambition was to go to bed to rest, or to go to the Vistula to bathe. We were shown a few hard tennis courts on which the Davis Cup matches were played. We were given a tremendous propaganda lunch after which a bathe obviously became inadvisable. We were carefully kept away from the Jewish quarter, which was picturesque enough to interest us, because it was considered too dirty. Later, in Posnan, we were taken to an exhibition where we had to admire rows of boots because they were made in Poland, where we had to climb through a tramcar because it was made in Poland, where we were shown unlimited evidence of the fact that Poland was rapidly becoming as industrialised and as unpicturesque as the rest of Europe. Our most pleasant recollection of that country was of an event which did not occur anywhere in the programme so carefully prepared by the propaganda department of the Foreign Ministry. Somewhere on a country road our car was held up by a long procession of pilgrim peasants going to visit some shrine. I should be sorry

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to forget the lovely colours of their costumes and the quiet sincerity of their faces as they tramped bare-footed through the August dust and sunshine.

We finally grew so tired of the everlasting propaganda and the invariable way in which we caught our trains only by arriving at the stations a moment or two less behind schedule than they did, that, after our last breakdown, we set out to walk to Danzig. A promised military aeroplane to take us there had degenerated into a passenger aeroplane, then into a large car, and finally into an overcrowded Ford which had its second puncture at two in the morning ten miles from the Free City.

The chauffeur had been ordered to mend the spare tyre after the first puncture but of course had not done so. The dust was so thick on the road that one had to feel about in it for nuts, valves and spanners. When Gerald Barry and I returned after a long pilgrimage to get petrol, which was running low because the most obvious precautions had not been taken, our guide looked up from an unholy jumble of inner and outer tubes, pumps, jacks, hammers and screwdrivers and declared with his ineffable optimism: "*C'est déjà fini*".

It was. Gerald and I lost our tempers and said we preferred to walk. We tramped through the dust for some miles and then came to forked roads. We had no means of knowing which was the shorter way out of Poland and into the territory of the Free City and for another humiliating hour we had to wait until the car we had left in contempt rattled up and took us on board.

The Poles threatened to call for us at ten o'clock to drag us round Danzig. Tired as we were, we managed

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to leave the hotel at five minutes to ten, and we remained lost all day until it was time to take the train to Berlin. We celebrated our emancipation from propaganda by sitting outside a café in the Lange Markt and drinking a bottle of good Rhine wine.

How differently we in Great Britain would think of Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia or Roumania, if the governments of those countries would ever admit that they had made a mistake. One of the greatest miracles of post-war Europe is the way in which Poland, with her territories lopped off three great neighbouring states, with the officials of three different and rival administrations, with her people put on the map again after a disappearance from it lasting one hundred and fifty years, has become an important factor in world politics. But one forgets all about that when one is dragged around the thoroughly hideous new port of Gdynia. The Hungarian people are certainly among the most charming in Europe, and yet I know only three Hungarians whose friendly hospitality I do not suspect of being part of their irredentist propaganda. There are other countries one would like and respect far more than one does if it were possible to have a meal with one of their diplomats and escape without an indigestible bundle of booklets and pamphlets. Several European budgets might be balanced if the governments would only realise how great a proportion of all this stuff finds its way to the wastepaper baskets of harassed journalists.

On one occasion when I was travelling between Hungary and Roumania even one of God's humblest insects had to serve a propagandist purpose. I was

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almost on a mission for the League of Nations, and was therefore looked upon as a person of some importance. There was quite a crowd of notabilities on the station platform at Cluj, the capital of Transylvania, to meet me. Cluj, it must be realised, is now Roumanian; before the war it was Hungarian, and answered to the name of Koloszvar (Klausenberg for the Germans). And the change in ownership and name is one of the most bitter subjects of dispute between Roumanians and Hungarians.

In the sleeping-car I was bitten on the eyelid by a bed-bug, and I arrived with my face swathed in bandages. The Roumanians who met me were full of polite concern. Had I been in a motor accident? Had I been ill-treated by the Hungarians?

I explained curtly what had happened to me, and my hosts looked a little disconcerted. Then one of them won the enthusiastic approval of his colleagues by pointing out that the train had come from Budapest. What else, he hinted, could I expect?

Two days later I returned to Budapest, and I still wore a black shade over my eye. The same comedy at the station. Again I explained I had been bitten by a bed-bug. But what else could I expect, my Hungarian friends asked me, if I would go travelling in Roumania?

* * *

Of one orgy of propagandist food and drink I have retained none but the most amiable memories. I had told the authorities in Bucharest that I proposed to visit Bessarabia, the province which belonged before the war to Russia and which now belongs to Roumania. I

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went there with that most cheerful of companions, George Boncescu, now a notable member of the Roumanian Legation staff in Washington.

As the train drew in at the station of Kishineff, the Bessarabian capital, Boncescu told me to wait for him on the platform while he went to get a message from the station master. My wait was not dull. The whole place was decorated with French flags, and men in uniform or in antiquated morning coats and top hats were hurrying up and down searching for some distinguished French visitor. I, with nothing better to do, joined in the search. When at last Boncescu came back to fetch me the Frenchman had still not been found. Boncescu and I climbed into an old cab and were about to drive away to a hotel when a very smart officer came up to us, clicked his heels, and asked if one of us was the Baron Berthlet. I explained that I was not a baron but that my name was Bartlett. Apparently I was the distinguished visitor. Doubtless the Foreign Office in Bucharest had instructions to the effect that a certain Vernon Bartlett was coming to Bessarabia and was to be filled with good food and drink and to be shown nothing. The telegram in transmission had changed the strange word "Vernon" into the better known "Baron". And surely Baron Berthlet must be a Frenchman.

I was, of course, delighted but my Roumanians were in great distress. They could not believe that I did not feel insulted because I had been mistaken for a Frenchman. During the large official banquet a great deal of fidgetting and whispering went on. Whenever I turned to one of my neighbours to make a polite

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remark I would find that he was discussing something with somebody else behind his chair. At last the town band came in buttoning up its tunics as it did so. It must have been summoned in a great hurry. The conductor cleared his throat and tapped his baton. Then as everybody stood to his feet the band struck up "Tipperary", in the firm belief that this was the British National Anthem.

Nor was this all. Kishineff has a very large Jewish population and the deputy mayor was himself a Jew. He told me that there was to be a special service in my honour at one of the local synagogues. When I arrived there I had to write my name on a piece of paper and give it to the Rabbi who was taking the service. Clutching it in his hand he proceeded to appeal to God. It was exactly like the Psalms—at one moment he was filled with contrition, repentance and pleading; at the next, his voice rose boastingly and triumphantly. Rather to my horror I noticed that whenever my name was mentioned it was at the height of one of his bumptious and boastful periods. I almost feared that the God of the Old Testament would strike us all dead.

I was at that time still a member of the League of Nations Secretariat, and not many people connected with the League went to Bessarabia. The things done in my honour were almost innumerable. When I slipped on the stone staircase of the hotel people dashed from every corner of the hall to pick me up. When I went to the lavatory I found an unfortunate sentry keeping guard over me at the door. And perhaps the grandest thing of all was the loan of the provincial governor's special railway car.

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Bessarabia was then under martial law, and I do not think the governor often went in his railway car; it was so conspicuous that it might have attracted assassins. When we opened the door to go into it moths flew up in clouds from every cushion. But it gave me a grand, if an ephemeral, feeling of importance.

In his car we went to Tighina, a little town separated from Russia only by the River Dniester. There I went through an ordeal by alcohol which I hope will never be equalled. It was bitterly cold, and the officers of the garrison took me to the river bank by a bridge that had been broken down when things became serious between Roumania and Russia. With hands that trembled more from excitement than from the cold the major gave me a pair of field glasses and urged me to look at somebody going along the road across the river. "There", he said, "is a real Bolshevik". As I had been dining in London only a few weeks before with M. Krassin, the famous Russian diplomat, I was not so tremendously impressed as I should have been to see a simple Russian peasant going home to his breakfast. To me he looked very much like the Roumanian peasants on my side of the river, but I did not of course dare to say so. The River Dniester is not as wide as the Thames, but no strip of water could at that time have been a more nearly impassable barrier between two nations. Only during the winter when the river was solidly frozen was there any contact between them. That contact was confined to the occasional arrival on the Roumanian bank of some poor devil of a refugee who was fleeing from Russia.

We went back from the ruins of a fortress that had

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been built by the Genoese to a lunch at the principal hotel. Boncescu warned me that if anybody drank my health I should be most discourteous if I did not empty my glass. Many people drank my health. I sat next to the Prefect of Police, and it is to this day my firm conviction that every time I was not looking he signed to one or other of the guests to drink my health. Each time the guest raised his glass I dutifully emptied mine, and Tsuica, the local spirit, was by no means weak. At the end of the meal I stood on a chair with one foot on the table and made a speech in Roumanian about Bessarabia and the League of Nations. I need hardly add that I know no Roumanian, and yet in some way I had the gift of tongues since all the people present understood what I was talking about. Presumably I talked Italian and added a few Roumanian suffixes to the principal nouns. But of that I knew nothing. It seemed to be the most natural thing in the world that I *should* be able to talk Roumanian.

It was only when we got outside to return to the train that I realised I was thoroughly drunk. The Prefect of Police insisted on our drinking a stirrup cup, and he telephoned to the station to say that the express to Bucharest must be delayed. There was one car in Tighina—an old Ford—and in it we bumped over the frozen mud of the wide main street and scattered pigs and ducks before us. When we got to the station all the other passengers were leaning impatiently out of the train windows to see who it was who had kept them waiting. And, with a lack of organisation not uncommon in that part of the world, my special carriage had been placed as far away from the entrance to the

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station as it could possibly be. I had some two or three hundred yards to walk down the whole length of the train. I can remember saying to myself "Bartlett, for the honour of the League of Nations, walk straight", but I fear that I did the League no honour that day. Once back in my special car I fell into a sound sleep, only disturbed, according to Boncescu and his wife, by my occasional grumbles about "*Ce sale type de préfet*".

* * *

But one has to travel a long way to discover propagandists of such naïve and pleasant kinds. The worst type is to be found at international conferences, and the largest numbers that have ever been seen gathered together in one place must surely have been at the Paris Peace Conference.

The governments had to settle so many questions that there were not nearly enough experts to go round. As far as I remember not one of the officials responsible for the demarcation of the Polish "Corridor" had ever been there. The most fantastic claims were put forward and accepted because there was nobody to contradict them. Booklets, photographs, bewildered peasants in their national costumes—they all helped to influence the Paris discussions. It is a miracle, not that the peace treaties are so bad, but that they are not worse.

I attended the first Plenary Session of the Versailles Conference in order to make as good a summary as I could of the speeches for distribution, through Reuter's, to the British Press. A splendid position, I was told, had been reserved for me. When I arrived to occupy it I found that it was already occupied by a large and

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determined lady representing some remote paper, I believe, in the Philippine Islands. We both lost our tempers, and my recollection of the opening of the Peace Conference is a belligerent and unpleasant one.

But it was, of course, an unpleasant conference. Shortly before the German delegates were invited to Versailles a high fence was erected round a small bit of the park so that they could wander around behind it like animals in a zoo. It so happened that a press photographer took a picture of me when I was standing by this fence trying to see how strong it was, and this picture was unfortunately published in a London newspaper with the caption: "Hun delegate tries prison bars". In those days it was so terrible to be called a Hun that legal friends told me I had there material for a first-class libel action. I remember, too, how a rather burly English lady, who hated the Germans with unparalleled intensity, went into a chemist's shop, asked if they sold some patent medicine, and was received with the curt reply: "Yes, but not to Boches like you."

The day on which the Versailles Treaty was published I went off to a lovely beech-wood in Buckinghamshire to read the official summary of it prepared by my old friend and predecessor at the League of Nations Office, G. H. Mair. I have never gone back to that wood so filled with bitter memories, for paragraph after paragraph of that luckless treaty made it obvious that so many of my friends had died in vain and that all this talk about a war to end war had been nothing but a series of damnable lies.

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IN the middle of the Peace Conference I was, to my amazement, offered a job. Would I care to be the Paris Correspondent of the *Daily Herald*, which was about to be revived? Would I not! There was only one complication. I imagined the paper had not a great deal of money. I believed so fervently in the ideas that had been put forward by the *Herald* in its weekly form that I felt it would be almost a sacrilege to bargain for a decent salary, but I had a wife and a small boy to provide for.

George Lansbury, who was to be the editor, came over to Paris and I was told to settle things up with him. I never pass down the Rue de la Paix without recalling that settlement, for we discussed it as we drove along that street in a taxi. Or rather, Lansbury explained. Whatever happened, he wanted the *Herald's* correspondents to be freed from financial worries. Only thus could they do their best work. Now, how much money would I like?

This method was new to me. It embarrassed as much as it pleased me. I had decided in my own mind how much I ought to ask but now I hesitated to announce the figure. Such generous employers must not think of me as grasping. I cut off a very badly needed £200, and it was not until years afterwards that I

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committed the disloyalty of wondering whether Lansbury was not a very shrewd old man. Anyhow he was a charming employer during the few weeks I worked for him and he took my rather base desertion extremely well—perhaps I was not a good correspondent.

I deserted to the *Herald's* enemy, Lord Northcliffe. Sir Campbell Stuart, whom I had met casually towards the end of the war when I was a rather miserable reporter and he was engaged on important propaganda at Crewe House, quite unexpectedly offered me another job. He was to be Managing Director of *The Times* and I was to be his private secretary at £1000 a year—two years before I had got married on a salary of £250. I hesitated, but not for very long, before I decided to desert George Lansbury for work I should inevitably like very much less.

There was one small formality, Campbell Stuart explained—I should have to be approved by Lord Northcliffe. But it was only a formality.

I had my first interview with the great man. All through it I gazed in fascination at his fist which he kept clenched but motionless on his knee. In some odd way it gave me an impression of immense and ruthless energy. I hoped fervently I should never quarrel with its owner. I very nearly did on that first occasion.

"What's the price of ink?" Northcliffe demanded, and I had to admit that I did not know.

"What's the price of paper?" The same blank ignorance on my part.

"What's the good of your being secretary to the man who has to manage *The Times*?"

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I did not know, and said so. I had already arranged to leave the *Herald* and here I had lost *The Times*.

But not entirely. I suddenly realised that I was being offered yet another job. I was to be one of the "Chief's" own secretaries at the same salary. I was to rise at the crack of dawn, to read his and his rivals' newspapers, and to let him have before breakfast a detailed report on them all, even down to the treatment of the market reports or the make-up of the advertisement pages. I was terrified, but I accepted. Northcliffe was on the point of returning to London and I was to report for duty in a fortnight.

I reported, and was more or less told to go to hell. Lord Northcliffe was about to go into a nursing home and had only told me to join up after the Peace Conference was over. I hesitated to contradict him; he did not hesitate to contradict me. Before I knew where I was, I had been told he would not want me after all as one of his secretaries. But I should go, at the same salary, to *The Times* where my growing interest in foreign affairs would be more useful. I left Printing House Square a little hot and angry, but vastly relieved that I should not be working in very close conjunction with so forceful a man. Besides, there was always that nice four-figure salary.

But was there? I reported to *The Times*, was engaged as private secretary to Mr Wickham Steed, who had recently become editor, and was told I was very lucky (as indeed I was) to get a little more than half the promised sum. I was a very inefficient secretary and Mr Steed was a difficult chief, since he was always too busy to deal with his letters. I used to

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drive down from his flat to his office and obtain his verdict on as many subjects as possible. By the time we reached Printing House Square the floor of the car would be littered with letters on which I had scribbled something which I hoped would remind me what that verdict was. For the rest, I took decisions on matters of great importance with a dashing insouciance I should love to recover now, and kept out of my editor's way as much as I could. It was not until three years later, when I worked with him at the Genoa Conference, that I learnt how kind and generous he could be and how much I differed from him on almost every possible issue in international politics.

I suppose I was a considerable nuisance to the people on *The Times*. The method of my appointment to the staff suggested that I might almost be looked upon as one of "Northcliffe's young men". I could not therefore be dismissed. Probably everyone else was as relieved as I was when I was appointed correspondent in Switzerland—everyone except the two or three sub-editors in the Foreign Room who would have liked the job and who let me know quite a lot about their opinions of "favouritism" in the three or four weeks during which I tried to master the difficult job of sub-editing foreign telegrams and finding headings for them that were snappy, dignified and of the right length. There were occasions when the rejection of my umpteenth heading for some telegram of no importance nearly reduced me to tears of mortification. But I learnt nevertheless to realise how very lucky any foreign correspondent was to have his message put in the paper and not on the spike.

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As soon as I reached Bern I needed to remember that great surplus of news for which there was no room. There was some question on which there was a Swiss national referendum and it seemed to me one of great international importance. With some difficulty I obtained an interview with that perennial foreign secretary of Switzerland, Giuseppe Motta. I assured him airily that it would be in *The Times* of Tuesday and spent a large sum of money telegraphing it to London. It was in *The Times* of Tuesday—some eight lines out of a despatched eighty or so—and I received a severe reminder from London that I was to send everything by mail except news of the greatest importance.

Then came an avalanche. I had gone away for a few days to Belgium and had emphasised to my substitute the imperative need for economy. The avalanche, at Davos, killed seven people, but none of them was English, and, acting on the principle that the death of a dog in one's own back garden is more important than the death of a hundred thousand human beings in a Yangtse flood, my substitute wrote out a long story and sent it by post. On my return next day I found several telegrams, of which I have kept one: "Everyone here amazed you sent nothing Davos avalanche". After a lot of correspondence I received another telegram from Lord Northcliffe. "Explanations accepted but very bad beginning your work for *The Times*. It never can happen again. Chief."

Well, it wouldn't. I was homesick for the *Herald*, my salary was miserably inadequate for Switzerland, and my protests about the cost of living in that country had been rather curtly rejected by the manager. I

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wrote a violent letter to the Chief to point out that I had no love for his paper and no possibility of living on my income. Therefore I should be glad to resign.

There was an encouraging and unexpected reply. The manager wrote and asked me if I would not like another two hundred pounds a year, and Northcliffe sent me a series of the most charming and interesting letters I have ever received. I never met him again, but I developed towards him that sense of loyalty one always found among people who worked in close contact with him—even among those people who hated his politics and his habit of distorting news to fit in with them.

Bern was intolerably dull. I lived in a hotel that was crowded with the local diplomats. They had even less to do than I, and one could almost tell the day of the week by the antics of two Latin-American ministers who had tables on each side of mine in the restaurant. On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays the Venezuelan would stroll across to the Colombian (I cannot be sure of their nationalities) and ask what he proposed to do. What about a game of billiards, the Colombian would suggest. Splendid idea, the Venezuelan would reply, and off they would go together. On Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays the dialogue would be the same but the rôles would be reversed. The streets were even less exciting, and at that period I achieved considerable fame by being the only man who was accosted by a prostitute in the Marktgasse—a prostitute, be it added, who was only in Bern, as it were, between two trains. Nobody who was out of doors after ten in the evening could avoid the feeling that his presence there was criminal; most of us would slink along in the

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black shadows of buildings like cinema burglars.

The Germans came to my rescue by organising the Kapp Putsch in the spring of 1920. For some hours there was a flood of exciting rumours of civil war. I was instructed to do what I could to get news out from the south. Filled with warnings about censorship I bought two copies of the same dictionary and made it the basis for a complicated code. I left one copy with a friend in Switzerland, took the other into Germany with me, forgot it in the first hotel I visited and never sent a single message in cipher.

* * *

On only one subsequent occasion did I use a code, and there, too, I failed. There was great interest in the election of a successor to Pope Benedict XV. As press telegrams announcing the result were to be held up until all the papal nuncios abroad had been informed, I sent London a list of every Cardinal with the name of a city opposite it. As soon as the election was over I was to telegraph "Am going Paris" or "Am going Tunis", as the case might be.

There was great excitement outside St. Peter's when a Cardinal appeared on the balcony over the main entrance and shouted out the name of the chosen candidate. One possible candidate was Cardinal Ratti, another was Cardinal Tacci. The former was elected, but many people in the waiting crowd mistook the name. Celebrations were planned in Cardinal Tacci's native village, and I telegraphed to *The Times* that I was going to Bristol instead of to Warsaw!

It was during those days of waiting for the election

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of a new Pope, when we had to go down twice a day to see whether white or black smoke came out of the tin chimney near the Sistine Chapel to show whether agreement had been reached on the election of the new Pope, that I first met that grand writer, Ferdinand Tuohy. He was himself a Catholic and represented an American paper with a large Catholic circulation. It was his first visit to Rome, and I took him down to the Piazza San Pietro and showed him the Vatican, the Sistine Chapel and all the rest of it with the bored feeling of a man who really knew all about it. I pointed out the Papal apartments under the roof and Tuohy smiled in his quiet way. Then he went back and typed out a charming and neat little article which nearly led to his dismissal from his paper. For he alone, of all the journalists who gathered on the Piazza twice a day, had noticed that above the Pope's bedroom was a lightning conductor, and had drawn obvious conclusions, which were not entirely complimentary to His Holiness's trust in his Maker.

I nearly failed my paper a second time during that papal election. I had dutifully arisen before six on the morning of Cardinal Ratti's coronation as Pope Pius XI, and had dressed myself in the regulation evening clothes with white tie and tails. I had a special ticket which was supposed to secure me admission to St. Peter's by the door reserved for diplomats. But, like a fool, I got myself involved in an argument with a police commissioner over the fate of a fellow-journalist who had a less imposing ticket. The commissioner was probably as depressed by early rising as I was, and we quarrelled. He refused me admission and, when I

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went on arguing, called on three policemen to remove me by force.

A friendly Senator intervened, and the commissioner grudgingly said I might pass. But I was too angry. I told him I would never enter by his beastly door, and strode away. I soon repented of my folly. Outside every other door were impossibly large crowds. I should never get into the Basilica, and *The Times* would have no eye-witness account of the ceremony.

There was only one possibility. I might get into St. Peter's through the Vatican itself. I walked round to the back entrance, and got into conversation with the Swiss guard in charge. I tried out my few words of Swiss German on him, and he was delighted. I talked about the cherry blossom along the shores of his native lake, and he allowed me to pass through the gateway.

Thus I reached the Cortile San Damaso, where the Cardinals were climbing out of their motor cars to robe themselves for the ceremony. But I did not know the way into St. Peter's. I tried to follow the Cardinals, but was stopped by an official. So I went and hid behind a pillar until he had had time to forget about me, and only slipped out again when some Cardinal arrived with his assistants. I marched boldly up the stairs as though I had been attached to the staff of His Eminence for years. Five minutes later I was in St. Peter's with a crowd of people who ate sandwiches, chatted, climbed on to tombs or hung their hats on Altar candles. And *The Times* got its eye-witness account.

* * *

The Kapp Putsch was a desperate and unhappy

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business. While it lasted I saw so much misery and hatred that nothing which has subsequently happened there has filled me with that surprised horror which is the attitude of so many friends of Germany. No people who have suffered so much could be normal.

I had not been to Germany since 1914, and the obstacles that had to be overcome before I could obtain a visa in Zurich gave me a ridiculous feeling that I was entering a zone where my own life would be in peril. At Lindau, the town at which I landed after crossing Lake Constance, I had not the courage to enter a café or a restaurant. My clothes made me unpleasantly conspicuous, for Allied tailors were inspired by circles and curves whereas German tailors had gone cubist. Instead of swaggering around like a conquering hero in a defeated country I slunk about the streets in the rain until the time came for me to take the train to Munich.

The porter who carried my suitcase had two hooks instead of hands. Very diffidently, I asked if he had been wounded in the war, and he explained that he had been blown up by the British on Hill 60. I was thankful he guessed from my accent that I was a Dutchman, for I gathered that he had been on that hill of evil memory at the very time when I was in the opposite trenches. But for some reason I had to produce my passport and his delight knew no bounds. Had he not been a prisoner of war near Hull? Had he not been taught a few words of English by a friendly sentry? Had he not one ambition—to get back to England? He went off to tell his friends that I was an Englishman, and I had an almost triumphant send-off into the mysterious interior.

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People tell me that I exaggerate the friendly pacifism of the Germans shortly after the war. It would be difficult to do so. On that first visit I went to any number of small towns where I was peered at through the hotel windows as a curiosity, but on no occasion did a single individual show the slightest resentment against the country which had contributed so large a part in defeating his own and in imposing peace terms and a post-armistice blockade which had simultaneously destroyed so much health and hope. On that first evening the engine-driver suddenly went on strike and we had to sleep at Kempten. The hotel was crowded, but the manager lied like the devil in order to give me a bedroom I did not deserve, and he was up at four to give me some coffee before the train left again. It is true that when the train left I was not inside it. The coffee, being made of acorns, made me so desperately ill that I was clutching at the station railings and vomiting. But that did not detract from the hotel manager's kindness.

There *was* a chance then to make a decent and a lasting peace. The relief that the war was over, the conviction that it had been a most disastrous futility, the readiness to accept defeat if it meant an end of bitterness and hostility—these feelings *were* genuine, and they were those of the overwhelming mass of the population. Many crimes against common sense and decency have been committed by the Germans in this century. There is at least one great crime on the other side—the refusal to make a generous peace.

There was nothing to write about in Munich; the cheery British consul who gave me Benedictine in a

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litre beer glass was fascinating but he would not fit into any description of revolution. Kapp and Luttwitz, the two diehards who had started the revolution and had frightened the government into fleeing to Stuttgart, had already been defeated by a general strike of the workers. As has so frequently happened since I became a special correspondent, I arrived when all was over, including the shouting. But there were rumours of a Communist uprising in the Ruhr. There might be a "story" in that.

With an English colleague from Vienna I managed to get a seat in the first train going westwards. At some out-of-the-way station a huge fat man with glasses hauled himself into our carriage and, to my distress, plumped himself down next to me, entirely blocking my view of one of the world's prettier damsels. Being less careful and discreet than I have since learnt to be, I said something in English to my companion about the "sleek, fat brute". When we reached the next station and I was about to buy a bottle of wine, the brute in question suddenly burst into a little English song about a hen with a little wooden leg and another little drink that wouldn't do him any harm.

He was that most cheerful of companions, Lindsay Bashford, and as Northcliffe owned his *Daily Mail* and my *Times* we were the closest of colleagues. I used to hope he had not heard my remark, but once, months later, he said something to the effect that I was rather indiscreet. I still am, alas, but not in railway carriages.

Bashford, in his thirty-guinea overcoat, ran that Red revolution in the Ruhr. When the Workers'

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and Soldiers' Council of Essen was in session he would brush the sentry aside, walk in, and demand a car to take us up to the "Front". And generally he got it. They were desperate, those Red Guards, and they put up quite a good fight against the Reichswehr troops whom the government sent against them, but habit was too strong for them and Lindsay Bashford looked too important to be neglected.

The Social Democratic Government had already taken the first step towards suicide some months before, when it appealed to former regular officers to help it destroy the Spartakists, as the Communists were then called. As a result, von Kapp, who was one of them, had attempted his *Putsch*. The general strike defeated him, but the government took its second step towards self-destruction by setting the Reichswehr against the Reds in the Ruhr. They were not very violent Reds, although most of my messages from Essen to say so were crowded out of *The Times* by the most lurid accounts from Brussels, Rotterdam and Berlin about the atrocities they were supposed to be committing all round me. It was an act of brutal folly to shell them (and me) out of the city.

The first time I was arrested on that venture was up near the front line when a bunch of Red soldiers decided that the pass the Essen Workers' and Soldiers' Council had given us was worth nothing. We were probably spies, so we were driven back to Mülheim to army headquarters with a soldier with a loaded revolver on the step of our car and two rifles trained on us over the hood of the car in front. By promising the sentry on the running-board that we would give

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him a good meal when our pass was declared in order we persuaded him to point his revolver at the floor. As for the car in front, we could only hope, as it approached each pot-hole, that the men in it had not their fingers on their triggers. Its wheels covered us in such a cloud of dark grey dust that for most of the time we were quite invisible, but a stray bullet hurts just as much as an aimed one.

The commander-in-chief was a house painter by trade, and he told us at great length all about the Left-wing revolution he was going to lead to victory. Somewhere else in Germany was another ex-house painter or bricklayer's assistant who was just beginning to convince himself that he was predestined to save Germany from Communism, and many of Herr Noske's troops who fired at us when, with new passes in our pockets, we returned to the front line, were later to help Adolf Hitler to turn his fantastic ambitions into reality.

That pathetic little war was soon over for a rabble, however desperate and inspired, cannot carry through a revolution in face of artillery and machine guns. Lindsay Bashford would lecture the Red Guards on strategy and we both would telegraph home reports which, we hoped, might help to arouse feeling against an attack we considered abominable and unnecessary. We brought back wounded in our car and we tried so hard to rally the troops when they began to retreat that a bunch of them wanted to shoot us as spies. As the Reichswehr marched in at the north of the city we went southwards, depressed by the discovery that there could be such bitterness and hatred even between

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people of the same race and tongue, but never guessing how much those feelings were to grow.

The penalty for looting was death. As our car came round a corner on the road out of Essen it nearly ran into a group of men in the middle of the road. They scattered, but as we passed one of them made a jump on to the running-board and tried to open the door. The chauffeur put his brakes on but the man screamed to him to go faster. We managed to drag the man inside. As we did so a bullet splintered the door. The car swerved round another bend, and we were out of sight. The man sank to the floor at our feet and vomited over Bashford's smart brown shoe. He had been accused of looting and we had arrived just as he was about to be shot.

I saw enough fear, hatred and misery that year to last me for a long time. At intervals I would return to the incredible green, blue and white respectability of Switzerland to stagnate—orchards, sky and snow all as vivid as on those glaring picture postcards that you can still find at Swiss and seaside resorts. Beautiful, but how boring! How often I developed a mood which was admirably explained and summed up some years later in Geneva by an Irish journalist when, asked why he was so gloomy, he stretched a drunken hand across the bar to a dish of fruit, took an apple, put it solemnly on his head, and said: "I feel so damned Swiss tonight".

But then would come some fresh trouble in Central Europe, and a hectic week or two during which I would almost pray for the tranquillity of Switzerland—until I got it.

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THROUGHOUT the summer of 1920 war waged between the Poles and the Russians. The Russian advance on Warsaw was even more sensational than had been the Polish advance on Kief. As I came up the steps to my flat near Vevey, after some strenuous trip in Germany, the telegraph boy caught me with a message asking me to go at once to Danzig to cover the northern end of the Russian advance. At last, I said to myself as I sweltered in the heat from Basle to Berlin, I was to be a real war correspondent.

My feeling of awe was increased during my few hours in Berlin. I drifted in to the Adlon Bar, as did every newspaper correspondent there, to see who was in town and what the news was. Just outside the hotel entrance I found a formidable motor car driven by an American chauffeur. The passenger was a famous American journalist and war correspondent. I did not know him, but friends who were on the pavement to see him off explained that he was motoring to Warsaw and war. It would be quicker to go by train, as I was doing that evening, but it wouldn't look so good in the American papers. Certainly it was a magnificent departure, for we newspaper men gave the hero a bit of a cheer as his car drew away from the kerb, and a few polite German onlookers raised their hats. I

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felt that I was a poor sort of journalist not to think of a thing like that, and my damnable jealousy drove me to the bar with the excuse that I must drown my sorrows. While I was doing so, about an hour later, the hero reappeared. Neither he nor his chauffeur could talk much German and they could not find their way out of Berlin on their long journey, so they had come back to ask the hall porter.

I arrived in Danzig early in the morning, and left over a hundred pounds under the mattress in the sleeping car. There were strict regulations about the amount of money one might take out of Germany and I wanted to break the regulations in a big way, for I must somehow be able to pay for my telegrams to my paper and there were, in those days, no such things as letters of credit and travellers' cheques. At the frontier of the Polish Corridor there was a great noise of argument and strife in the next sleeping compartment over a humble pound or two. Quickly I hid my hundred and fell asleep again. But the customs official decided that he would not worry about a British journalist and thus spared me a lie on behalf of my paper. I awoke on the outskirts of Danzig and strode down the platform with all the excitement which war horses are alleged to feel as they scent a battle. Only when I reached my hotel did I realise I had no pocket book and it took me half an anxious hour to trace my sleeping car and my money.

Having thus miraculously recovered it I set out to spend some of it on a most moving despatch to *The Times* about the unfortunate Polish refugees arriving in Danzig. The despatch was printed before I realised that the unfortunate Poles were, in fact, relatively

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fortunate Jews who were able to go while the going was good. Polish patriots, and especially the anti-Semitic ones, were not at all pleased with my blunder but they found that to some extent its publication in England did help their cause and they hid well their contempt for anyone who had worried so little about the Jewish question that he could not distinguish most Jews from Gentiles. That knowledge has come since. The sight of all the Jews who crowded into Berlin's cabarets during the worst periods of crisis, who most blatantly displayed their riches when other people were most hungry, would have made one sympathise with Hitler's anti-Jewish campaign if it had not been so incomparably more callous, wrong-headed and, above all, calculating.

Danzig was charming. One reads so much of foreign cities that one's first impression on arrival in one of them is almost always a disappointing one. So far Danzig, Prague, Stockholm and New York are the only ones that have exceeded my expectations. I went out to Zoppot to dine and bathe, and an old Polish admiral—he had been an admiral in the Tsarist Russian Navy—took me on to a tiny seaside village and explained to me how it was to be turned into a great Polish port. I got so tired of this nonsense—for the place was only a shallow bay with no apparent natural facilities—that I tried to avoid any more of it by insisting on bathing. He had already explained that he hated being in the sea as much as he loved being on it, so while he paced up and down the foreshore, impatient to resume his propaganda, I swam about until I was so cold that later, in a foul village in East Prussia, I developed congestion

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of the lungs and nearly died of it. That seaside resort, so small that the only other bathers on that hot August day were two women with no upper parts to their bathing costumes, is now the flourishing sea-port of Gdynia, with a population of over 75,000.

But *The Times* could not be expected to be satisfied with my minor adventures and my attacks on the League of Nations High Commissioner, Sir Reginald Tower, for his refusal to allow Polish war materials to pass through the Free City of Danzig—although my attacks required a lot of courage since my sympathies were with the High Commissioner but my conscience was against him, and for once my conscience won. I must do something bolder to prove to myself and my paper that I was really a war correspondent. It was not enough to be stoned in the streets of Danzig because I had gone out with a dear little Polish colonel who was rash enough to appear in uniform. Somehow I must get to the Front.

Finally I obtained a magnificent permit and set out towards Warsaw. It was uncertain whether the train would get through for the Bolsheviks were alleged to be very near it in the neighbourhood of Torūn—Thorn of my boyhood days. Torūn therefore seemed to be the place to go to, and I was lucky enough to find a train with a sleeping car that was due there at about four in the morning. The conductor had the strictest instructions to wake me up half an hour before we arrived there. I went to bed filled with the heroic belief that I was now going to risk my life for my paper.

My arrival in Torūn was not very heroic. I was aroused by a lot of shouting and found that the train

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was standing in a station packed with soldiers. It was my destination. Cursing the sleeping-car attendant for forgetting to call me, I pulled on my shirt, trousers and shoes and bundled myself out on to the platform carrying coat, tie, collar, typewriter and suitcase. The soldiers were fortunately too tired to be very interested in my discomfiture when the patient attendant explained that he had not yet called me because the train had another three-quarters of an hour to wait at Torūn.

And there I was at four in the morning entirely surrounded by soldiers whose language I could not speak, unable to find out where the Russians were, very cold and hungry, and separated from the town and breakfast by miles of steppe-like land and the River Vistula. I dumped my suitcase and typewriter with no confidence that I should ever see them again, and set out into the unknown.

Perhaps my hatred of Polish propaganda dates from a ridiculous incident on that morning. After wandering along several sandy roads in what I believed to be the direction of the town I saw a signpost in the distance and hurried joyfully towards it. Now, at last, I should know where to turn for some breakfast and news. But the signpost was virgin white—the German names had all been effectively and vigorously painted out, but no Polish names had been painted in. I finally found Torūn by being arrested and taken to it as a spy.

They did not get as far as locking me up—had they done so, I should have had a "story". They released me, with smiles and apologies, to discover that there was no news in Torūn, although there might be at

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Grudziadz—Graudenz, of old—which was army headquarters. I tramped back to the station and waited for hours in an immense and over-heated queue to buy a ticket. Everybody wanted to get out of the place that day, for the Bolsheviks were supposed to have crossed the Vistula only a few miles away. Over the neck of the girl in front of me in the queue crawled a large louse. A pretty girl, too.

In some odd way I got on to a military train which took me to Grudziadz, and found that I could get no billet without a permit. Late that night I was allotted an attic bedroom in a vile hotel which was used, as the saying goes, for immoral purposes. The bed was incredibly dirty—there were no clean sheets in the building—and nobody had thought to empty my predecessor's slops. I wept a few tears of mingled anger, humiliation and fatigue as I lay down on the dirty floorboards and made my typewriter into a pillow. War correspondence, I decided, was not in my line.

And in any case the Poles and Russians were not going to allow me to see any war to correspond about. The very moment I reached my nearest point to the front line, the line withdrew. After arriving almost within sight of Warsaw the Russians began their retreat. There was no battle of any considerable importance, although one has naturally grown up in Polish imaginations with the passage of years. One of my more brutal and inventive colleagues who was in Warsaw at the time tells a story of the day after the battle when the retreat began. A Polish colonel, annoyed by the scepticism of foreign correspondents, said he would prove to them that there had been a battle. He made

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them tramp over miles of dusty ploughed fields to see the body of a dead Bolshevik and when they reached the spot this important piece of evidence had already been buried.

* * *

The Russian lines of communication had been stretched out beyond breaking-point and the retreat was proceeding much faster than I could obtain permits to advance. Besides, I wanted a change. In nearly a month I had been bitten by bugs on every night except one, when I slept in a bath in Bromberg.

I had gone there on a difficult pilgrimage in the hope of finding the people I had lived with nine years before. The cake shop in which I had stuffed myself when the pangs of hunger overcame those of unreturned love was still there and the old lady who kept it pretended to remember me. But the house belonged to some Poles who knew nothing about my German friends and told me so very curtly. The tennis courts in the Schleusen gardens were still there, but nobody I knew was playing on them. I walked up and down the Danzigerstrasse searching for old acquaintances. I may have passed some of them, for I could not bring myself to realise that the young girls and fellows I had known would now be staid parents of families.

I found nobody but an old man whose daughter had often been on excursions with us in the old days. He took me back to his house—where the Iron Cross he had won in the Franco-Prussian war fifty years before stood in a glass case on the table—and begged me with pathetic flattery to persuade my compatriots that the Corridor must be given back to the Germans.

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I had been so happy here in Bromberg—so happy even when I was most miserable—that I was only too glad to get away from it again. One ought to have some places in one's memory which are one's own, which have never been contaminated by this hatred and drab suffering of war, in which live people who make their own lives and whose comfortable little careers are not swept away by this insensate tornado. I was sorry for my old man in his bewilderment and poverty, but still more sorry for myself. For the first time, as I spent interminable hours in a crowded waiting-room for a train to take me away from Bromberg again, I realised how definitely I and my contemporaries belonged to a lost generation. Our bodies, but not much else of us, had survived the war.

* * *

I had had enough of the Polish Corridor and I conceived the bright idea that I could best follow the Russian retreat not by arguing with Polish staff officers about permits which they were wise enough to refuse but by hiring a motor car and going along the East Prussian frontier inside Germany but as close to the frontier as I could go. In this way—at least so I imagined—I should see the whole of the fighting and should be able to telegraph home the most vivid descriptions of it to my paper. Also, I thought I should avoid these wretched bed-bugs.

Things didn't turn out quite as I had anticipated. Each time I got to the frontier I found soldiers on guard who knew nothing of what was happening in the land of mystery beyond them. All that I could

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discover would be, not fighting armies, but huge flocks of geese looked after by a few small and harmless-looking children. There was nothing adventurous about the business except the way in which one's motor car had to zigzag to and fro after nightfall because in order to keep the roads from becoming rutted the authorities had conceived the brilliant idea of rolling great stones out into the roadway so that one had to swerve around them like trick riders in a gymkhana.

And so it was until we reached a little place called Prostken. In this neighbourhood there had been fighting and nobody at the frontier knew whether the Russians or the Poles were in command of Grajevo, a small town a few miles across the border.

The inhabitants of Prostken had no affection for the Russians. Most of them were still living in wooden huts since the Russians had destroyed their homes six years before in their advance to the disaster of Tannenberg. Therefore, when I announced that I proposed to cross the frontier half the village turned out to assure me this act would be the height of folly. The chauffeur refused to drive his car into No Man's Land, and only by paying him a large extra sum could I persuade him to allow me to drive it for him. He sat in melancholy in a public-house while the frontier barrier was lifted in my honour and I drove south-eastwards towards Grajevo.

I was, as a matter of fact, quite absurdly frightened and nobody in the world's history crashed his gears more atrociously than I did on that short trip. And I did meet some retreating Russians although they showed very little inclination to hang me from the nearest tree.

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What interested them far more than my fate was their fate. How, they asked me anxiously, could they get across the frontier into the relative security of East Prussia? They had tried at various points and had been turned back, for already there were large concentration camps of Russian refugees, and spotted typhus and other diseases had made their appearance in these camps.

I like to tell myself now that I saved my life only by saving theirs but I am afraid it is not true. I had, as a matter of fact, got on very well with a pleasant German officer in Prostken and I was sure that he would let me and my Russian friends back across the border. And so I returned to Germany, for the first and, I presume, the last time in my life leading a very small squadron of Bolshevik cavalry. Possibly had I refused to help the Russians would have demanded some sort of ransom from me. Probably they would have been content with a drink in the little public-house to which they took me, but I did manage to persuade the German frontier guard that I could be saved from danger only if he admitted these five or six more Russians to join the tremendous army of refugees already interned at Arys.

I left my Russians as soon as I could and preceded them to this internment camp, for it was obviously the only place in the neighbourhood which might provide a story for my paper. It was a fantastic place. Some forty thousand Russian refugees were interned there, men and women in the same wooden huts. I had great difficulty to get past the sentries for nobody was admitted who had no medical or military reason for

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being there. I have forgotten the list of diseases which one of the sentries gave to me in order to persuade me that the best thing to do was to go quietly home to Danzig, but at the time they alarmed me and I felt I was running the greatest risk when finally I got into the place while another sentry's back was turned. The fear of spotted typhus kept me from buying any of the objects of loot which the prisoners offered me so anxiously. Gold watches, diamond rings, and heaven knows what, were held out by prisoners who had stolen them, heaven knows where, and wanted to be rid of them at the earliest moment before anybody came along and commandeered them.

For hours I slopped around in the mud trying vainly to find some really thrilling story for *The Times*. If there were any thrilling stories, I missed them, for even the men who were dressed in old British uniforms—which had been supplied to them when they were in General Denikin's army before they deserted to the Bolsheviks—could only talk Russian of which I knew less than a dozen words. Tired and dispirited I returned to my car and determined to spend the night at the first decent hotel we came across on the road.

I had reckoned without the horse-dealers. The favourite item of loot had been horses. Every Russian who could do so had crossed the German frontier on horseback and the news had got round Germany at incredible speed. For miles and miles every hotel was packed with hearty horse-copers on their way to Arys to buy up every animal on four legs. There was nothing for it but to zigzag for at least a hundred miles across East Prussia. At last we

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reached an inn in which, as in most other inns at that time, the sheets on my bed were wringing wet—one either had them dirty or had them washed on the day one needed them. These sheets and the depressingly long bathe I had had at Gdynia in order to avoid my Polish propagandist admiral were too much for me. I shivered all night, woke up with a high fever, and was far too ill to write very much about my internment camp at Arys until the whole war was over.

I have heard a good many shots fired in anger since the Armistice. But only twice have I been a war correspondent. One was for this short period during the Russo-Polish war, and the other was, more or less accidentally, during the civil war in Spain. During the first period I never heard a shot fired or ran the slightest risk except of a motor accident or an unpleasant touch of typhus or some similar disease. During the second, I probably ran very little more risk than I should by crossing Piccadilly inattentively.

And I doubt whether my copy was much the worse for that. The job of a special correspondent is less often to be in the front line than to be somewhere back near headquarters with good lines of communication. The more conditions are chaotic the more it is important for the journalist to take precautions to get his story through. And although I have seen some of my colleagues taking the most serious risks in order to get a good story for their papers, I am inclined to think that those who write most about being constantly under fire are not necessarily those who produce the best stories. Indeed, danger frequently produces no newspaper story at all. I was never in such peril as

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one evening in the Adlon Hotel in Berlin when an American colleague with delirium tremens rushed around the place with a revolver. And yet I felt—and felt rightly—that the less I told *The Times* about that particular incident the better.

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LINES of communication are as much of a worry to the newspaper man as they are to the general on or behind the battlefield. 'It is often so much easier to get a news story than to send it on to one's paper. This holds good even now when you can telephone to almost every place in the world with very little delay. For wherever there is a big news story so many journalists gather together to collect it that communication almost invariably breaks down.

Technical developments have robbed the newspaper man's job of its romance and its dignity. Gone are the spacious days when one wrote despatches in which style was as important as speed. The strange belief held by editors and newspaper proprietors that the public would rather read a scrappy and uninformative account of some event today than an explanatory and complete account tomorrow compels us to rush off to places by air in order to telephone back messages which must be sufficiently highly coloured to justify the expense and sufficiently speedy (and therefore of uncertain accuracy) to avoid a "beat" by some rival correspondent. Women are said to dress for other women; in the same way newspapers are edited for other editors.

There was a time when I used to write enthusiastic articles about flying. I was fascinated by the idea that

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I could have an early breakfast in London and lunch in Vienna. A month or two ago I dined comfortably in Amsterdam and was back in my London flat long before my normal bedtime. My contempt for people who preferred to travel by train and boat was outspoken and sincere. The business of climbing up through the grey mist into the clear sunshine and of watching the shadow of one's machine racing across the snow-like field of clouds below is still fascinating. But I now so hate going from place to place in an aeroplane that I frequently swear I will never do so again—and then go round to buy another air ticket because I need to get somewhere in a hurry.

My change of view dates from a flight from Bucharest to Belgrade some years ago. I awoke to find snow thick on the window-sill of my bedroom and took it for granted the flight was off. While I was peacefully having breakfast the hotel porter announced that the omnibus was waiting to take me to the airport. There was one other passenger, who told me the most hair-raising stories, as we drove along, of the tremendous dangers of flying in snow.

We waited an hour at the airport while they argued whether or no the pilot should be allowed to risk the machine in order to get his flying bonus, and then the other passenger went home. I would have gone with him had I not funkcd the vile railway journey that was the only alternative method of reaching Belgrade. When the pilot finally decided to leave I was more elated than frightened and my elation increased when the snow stopped and the sun came out. I looked down pityingly at the little toy houses in which lived

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human beings who were unable to fly like birds. My map showed that we should follow the valley of the Danube, and I peered out to identify the Iron Gates and other famous landmarks.

And then we began to bump. I had never thought an aeroplane could tumble about in that way without crashing. For what seemed to be hours I kept my head buried in a paper bag the purpose of which was printed on it in ten different languages. I stole a spare bag as a souvenir and occasionally have a look at it when I need reminding how bad life can be at its worst.

At last the young French pilot attracted my attention by a more terrific bump than ever. I found that he was so busy pointing downwards that he was not worrying about the controls. Far below us was a large city—Belgrade. In a few minutes, I told myself, I should be on my way to my hotel and could stay in bed there for the rest of the day.

But I did not know enough of the geography of Belgrade. The aeroplane flew on past the houses to an airport well beyond the junction of the Rivers Save and Danube. I could see no bridge across which a car could bring me to my hotel. Indeed in those days there was none. All that the omnibus at the airport could do was to bring me to a landing-stage at the water's edge, where the conductor explained by signs that I must wait for a steamer.

When it came I found that I, as the only first-class passenger, was perched on a prominent deck. The peasants who crowded the rest of the ship were as interested in me and the odd labels on my luggage as,

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in other circumstances, I should have been in them.

The sun had come out, the wind had dropped. The little steamer chugged its peaceful way down the Danube towards Belgrade on its commanding rock. But there was just enough of a throb about the engine to remind my stomach muscles of their past activities. I, a member of one of the greatest seafaring races the world has ever seen, stood on my raised and conspicuous deck and was sick into the calm waters of the River Danube.

* * *

From that day my nerve was badly knocked about. The process of its destruction was completed a year or two later by a flight across the Rockies from Denver City to San Francisco. A few months previously I had badly strained my heart and air journeys were inadvisable. But time was so short that I had no choice unless I was to miss seeing a city I had always longed to visit.

Details of the journey matter to nobody but me. At each landing-place they helped me out of the machine and, holding me under the arms, dragged me up and down in the fresh air. I had heard a great deal about the charm and beauty of the neat grey-uniformed stewardesses, but who wants a charming and beautiful stranger to be hanging around while one is busy with one's little cardboard box. My stewardess dutifully placed her hand on my forehead, but I was too ill to beg her to leave me alone in my misery. She took my pulse and sent through notes to the pilot with the result that we flew lower but bumped more. She urged me to leave the machine at Salt Lake City, and Reno, but I

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was uninterested in Mormons and divorces. I wanted to get to San Francisco.

When we did arrive I was met by a doctor and an ambulance and was given an injection which obliterated all memory of how I got to bed in my hotel. When I awoke next morning the first thing I saw was a seagull sitting on the sill of my window, a reminder to me that I had reversed the rôle of Noah and had rediscovered water after that immensity of prairie which sounds so exciting and is so infernally dull. I dressed hurriedly, anxious to see San Francisco without delay.

My hotel was perched on the summit of Nob Hill. I came out of its front doorway after an argument with the hall porter, who wanted to order me a taxi. For once, I urged him, let a poor Britisher walk on his own flat feet. I didn't so much mind being thrust in a car in those middle-western towns where I had been bored by the monotony of the chain store displaying exactly the same line of goods as every one of its innumerable branches throughout the country. There there was no incentive to walk and one was constantly amazed and humbled by the intellectual liveliness and curiosity of the inhabitants of such places. But San Francisco was the gateway to the Pacific. I was not going to miss any of its fascination by being rushed around in a taxi.

I flaunted off towards the Chinese quarter down a hill as steep as the little main street of Clovelly. And almost at once my knees, weakened by all the illness of yesterday, gave way beneath my weight and I rolled, in the most undignified manner down the street towards the Pacific Ocean. My only consolation, when I picked

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myself out of the gutter and dusted myself, was that the hotel porter had gone back out of sight.

* * *

Thus, whenever a big story breaks I do not beg my editor to allow me to jump into the first aeroplane and to rush to its scene. Instead, I have a tremendous struggle with myself as to whether I could not cover it even better if I travelled by train and arrived hours later, but feeling fit. And when I do arrive I am so hampered by two other weaknesses that I wonder any editor ever sends me on any mission where I am likely to meet competitors. I lack both the persistence to worry men with great responsibilities at their busiest and most critical moments and the ability to cajole, or even to bribe, the right telephone operator when it is essential, by foul means or fair, to get one's message back to the sub-editor's desk without delay.

And vanity, I suspect, is at the root of both of these weaknesses. I find it difficult to remember that I am not an unimportant (except to myself) individual when I urge some Prime Minister to open his heart to me, but the representative of so many hundreds of thousands of British readers who will see the paper in which my interview appears. Only a few months before the murder of King Alexander of Yugoslavia I had spent several days in the constant company of his cousin, Prince Paul, the new Regent. Almost certainly I knew him better than any other newspaper man who turned up in Belgrade for that tragic but picturesque funeral. I also carried a letter from the closest English friend of the murdered King's mother-in-law, Queen

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Marie of Roumania. Prince Paul and Queen Marie were, at that moment, two of the most important people in Europe. A talk with either of them would have produced a despatch which would have been quoted in almost every country in the world. But I was so anxious that they should not consider me a cad for intruding on their private grief that I made only the mildest efforts to see either of them, while a more courageous and experienced rival put on his silk hat, drove boldly up to the Palace at Dedinje, sent in his card of condolence, met Prince Paul in the grounds and had the world-quoted interview I might have obtained.

As for the delivery of my despatch to the sub-editor's desk, I take myself so seriously and am apt to consider what I write as so important that I resent messages from editors asking me for news or comments on the news in time for the next edition. I would like to withhold all mention of it until I have had time to think it over and to make up my mind. Then I would like to turn out a weighty "think piece" which must arouse the wrath or distress of any night-editor who knows his job. It is, in fact, a lasting puzzle to me that any newspaper gives me regular employment, for I am completely uninterested in obtaining news (except on occasions when I am caught by the same fever that occasionally makes me gamble or bet) and would prefer to send home every despatch by mail.

And, unwillingly on my part and unexpectedly on the part of *The Times*, I was to some extent a pioneer in this substitution of the spoken for the written word. When I represented that paper in Rome I was the only correspondent whose copy had regularly to be

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sent by telephone instead of by telegraph.

My rivals stood little chance of getting their messages into the paper unless they were filed at the telegraph office before six in the evening. They must have taken a malicious joy when I, waiting another two hours to telephone my message, would be met with the information that once again the telephone line to Milan had broken down. Those were anxious days in Italy, for Fascism was becoming a force in the land and nobody knew when some fresh battle between Fascists and Socialists would break out, and when the correspondent would get an unpleasant rap over the knuckles from his editor for missing the story. If my telephone worked all right I should have the only uncensored message in London. If it did not work I should once again miss some important event and receive the reproaches of my foreign editor. Nobody but another journalist can possibly understand the anxiety of those two hours between six and eight.

Nor does it always help to have a "scoop". Every foreign correspondent has learnt to his cost how often the first message about some big event is stopped by censor while other belated messages are allowed to go through. It happened by the merest chance—a telephone call to a hotel in Naples to ask if I could reserve rooms for a holiday put me on to the news—that I knew of the death of Caruso at least two hours before any other foreign newspaper man in Rome. My message, I told myself, would be in London before the evening papers in Italy could announce the news. In actual fact I was the only newspaper man who missed the story altogether, and I can hardly blame my office

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at home for doubting my explanation that some wretched official had tucked my message away and forgotten all about it.

* * *

I have had, however, my share of luck. Quite a lot of it was connected with that unfortunate man, King Constantine of Greece, who died in 1923 in miserable exile in Italy. More by chance than by design I found myself in January, 1920, staying in the same hotel in St. Moritz as this king in exile, and I felt it my duty to interview him. But he had not then been interviewed and he had no intention of being interviewed. Or so I was assured by his aide-de-camp. It was only on my last day there that trouble with the bindings of my skis kept me at the hotel entrance longer than I had expected, and that one of the King's secretaries was just able to catch me to say that His Majesty had changed his mind and would receive me at once. Wearing the heaviest pair of boots in Europe I clanked into his drawing-room and was given what should have been an extremely important interview. It was, in fact, an important interview, but *The Times* under the Northcliffe regime showed a partiality in the printing of its news which was a disgrace to a paper with a great reputation. *The Times* had not liked King Constantine's attitude during the war and it was not at all interested in his detailed and very convincing account of why he adopted that attitude. Not a word of my interview appeared in print. Not at that time at any rate.

Nearly a year later Venizelos lost the election and the King was requested to return to Athens. I was

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urged by my foreign editor to interview him without delay. I rushed off to Lucerne where he was then living and was at first met by a refusal. What was the good, the King's secretary asked me, of giving me an interview since I could not be sure that *The Times* would print it. I showed him my telegram of instructions and at last saw the King. At once he said that there was nothing to be gained by wasting time and asked if I had with me the text of the interview he had given me before. I produced it from my pocket and together we went through it altering a sentence or two here and there, and off it went to *The Times*. In return I received a warm message of thanks for the very interesting statement, a statement which had been rejected out of hand less than a year before.

Just before I went to Lucerne I had had a talk with my editor, Wickham Steed, in which he had explained to me that he wanted me to go as *Times* correspondent to Rome. I listened very little to his instructions for I was wondering all the time whether I dared tell him that I knew so little of Italian history that I did not even understand the difference between the two courts—the “Quirinal” and the “Vatican”—to which he was referring so learnedly. But I reflected that there was nothing to be gained by refusing promotion and that careful study of the article on Italy in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* might help me to hide some of my ignorance. It was therefore arranged that I should see King Constantine off Swiss territory and should then go on to Rome.

But the uncertainty over Greek affairs lasted for seven weeks. King Alexander, the ex-King's son,

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died on October 25th and it was not until December 14th that Constantine set out for Athens. Everything had been done to prevent his return. The crown had been offered to his younger son, Prince Paul, a pleasant young fellow who was then much more interested in dancing and learning how to make cocktails than in worrying about governing a people. Acting upon instructions from his father's ex-Foreign Minister, M. Streit, he refused the offer. That same evening he received the journalists who were staying in Lucerne and handed them the text of his refusal. He knew so little about what he was refusing that to every question of every kind that was put to him he could only answer: "It's on the paper". Then came a great republican attempt to win the election. This also failed and M. Venizelos in turn went into exile. As the days went by more and more Greeks suddenly discovered that they had always felt the most intense loyalty for Constantine, and they came trooping in delegations to present their respects to him.

The most worried man of all was the Swiss detective whose job it was to protect the King. One day he told me all his troubles. The worry, he explained, was due less to any particular affection for King Constantine than to his fear that if anything went wrong he would not receive the gold cigarette case, or whatever other present it was, the King would offer him on departure. He had already made quite a useful collection of royal gifts from exiles who had taken refuge in Switzerland and he did not want to break his record.

The record was not broken. Despite a cable from a Greek Socialist in Chicago "commanding him to

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abdicate" Constantine set out for Greece. An Italian aviation company had offered him two aeroplanes and a telegram from Spain had promised him a bodyguard of twenty Spaniards for his protection. One man wrote that he was absolutely invulnerable and that if the King would attach him to his staff at a good salary His Majesty would be free from all danger. But his departure was as dull and unromantic as it could be. Somebody had spread flowers and branches of trees all over the staircase of the hotel and the King and Queen failed hopelessly to look dignified as they picked their way carefully through the foliage. The hotel staff and the twelve visitors who were facing a Lucerne winter came to the door to see them off. The royal party drove to the station in the hotel omnibus, and a few score of people who had nothing better to do collected at the station. They were less interested in King Constantine, however, than in one of my American colleagues who sat on one suitcase, put his typewriter on another, and tapped out a last message on the platform. I don't know how the King got on in his part of the train that took him to Venice but I know that I and one of my companions were horribly bitten by bugs. It was an inauspicious end of a period of exile.

Venice was abominable. A bitter wind swept down the narrow canals and froze us to the marrow. In that atmosphere St. Mark's looked like a drop scene in a provincial music hall. The famous Campanile looked like a large factory chimney. The old weather-worn palaces were remarkable less for their architecture than for the amount of plaster that was falling off them.

I had received instructions from my paper to go to

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Athens to describe the King's arrival unless any very important news made it necessary for me to take up my new job in Rome instead. Shivering in this wintry gale I was taken out to see a horrible little steamer called the *Yperochi* which had been chartered for journalists and for minor members of the royal staff, while the King himself was to travel on the cruiser *Averoff*. The *Yperochi* was to slip through the Corinth Canal in order to arrive off Phaleron before the King, who was to make the longer journey round the Peloponnesos. But as soon as I saw the *Yperochi* my nerve failed me. If it was going through the Corinth Canal it would go through it without me.

On no other occasion have I so deliberately shirked my duty. Early next morning I felt acutely uncomfortable as I lay in a luxurious hotel bed and watched the *Averoff* sail on its homeward journey to the strains of the Greek national anthem. Had it been still possible I should have chartered a motor boat to take me out to the *Yperochi* and its misery. I was heartily ashamed of the cowardice and dishonesty which had driven me the night before to telegraph to London that I believed Rome to be a more important destination than Athens.

Sailing down the Adriatic in a filthy storm the *Yperochi* was nearly wrecked. As far as I remember she lost her rudder and had to put into Valona for repairs. When she finally arrived at Athens her passengers were far too late to describe the enthusiasm which welcomed the King's return. All was over including the shouting.

I, on the other hand, went ashamedly to Rome. As soon as I arrived there Giolitti, the prime minister, shelled D'Annunzio out of Fiume. Few people knew

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that this was going to happen. I was certainly not one of them. But I received the warmest congratulations from Lord Northcliffe for having already discovered such valuable sources of information, and I was too great a coward to explain that my success had been due to an inexcusable negligence of duty.

* * *

But fortune has not always smiled upon me. It failed notably to do so during the Genoa Conference of 1922, the first conference at which the Russians were represented since they swung left in 1917. It was also the first conference at which M. Barthou was able to show that there was another Frenchman even more negative in his attitude than the meticulous little Raymond Poincaré.

Meticulous is the only adjective that really fitted M. Poincaré. I believe that even when he was most pressed he still insisted on writing his letters in his own crabbed handwriting. And that once he had written something on paper it remained written on his mind.

It is told of him that he once went on a speaking tour in the south of France during which he made the same speech twice a day except for a few preliminary remarks in which he referred to the local cathedral, the local waterfall or the local celebrity. All went well until his car broke down and caused him to miss his luncheon and the speech that was to follow it. That night at dinner he made the speech he would otherwise have delivered at luncheon. The next day at luncheon the audience heard him refer not to their local historian or general but to the cathedral which distinguished the

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town where he had dined the night before. The only way in which he could get his time-table right again was to stop his car on a deserted road and to make his superfluous speech to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field.

Those two Frenchmen, Poincaré and Barthou, between them made a successful conference impossible. They did not know whether they hated the Germans or the Russians more but they hated them both a great deal. They never stopped to think that M. Tchicherin and Herr Rathenau might get tired of waiting, and do something startling.

Nor, for that matter, did we, and least of all on Easter Monday. I had been helping Wickham Steed, my editor, and that had involved long hours and no amusements. I decided that on Easter Monday I was safe to take a holiday and justified in so doing. Delegations were scattered along the coast between Genoa and Rapallo, and at Rapallo was a casino where one could gamble.

I suggested to my editor that I might go along to see what the Russians had to say for themselves, for the Russians lived within a mile or two of the casino, and Herbert Sidebotham, ("Scrutator" of the *Sunday Times*) and Percy Philip, of the *New York Times*, were as anxious to gamble as I was. I had some difficulty in persuading them that I must call in at the Russians' hotel in order to keep my conscience quiet and my editor satisfied.

We met Maxim Litvinoff in the hall and he took us up to his room with a great air of mystery. If he told us a very important piece of news, would we promise to

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say nothing about it to any other journalist in Genoa? Would we not! Bit by bit out came the facts about the secret treaty of Rapallo, signed the previous day between Russia and Germany in that very room. It was obvious that so important an agreement between the two poor relations, so consistently snubbed and insulted by the other Great Powers, was the most sensational event of the conference. It was one of those events which would shake the world, and Sidebotham, Percy Philip and I, alone of the world's newspaper correspondents, knew about it. It was only to be announced to the world on the following day.

Roulette was forgotten. That winding coast road from Rapallo to Genoa, the beauty of which had so often made us lyrical and sentimental, now drove us to fury, for there are somewhere about twenty level crossings and at each of them the gates were shut to allow the passage of some dilatory and aggravating train. We almost prayed the gatekeepers to let us through, for it would be heartbreaking to miss even one edition with so magnificent and so nearly exclusive a story. It was already dusk when we reached Genoa and hurried by back streets to our hotels, frightened lest we might meet colleagues and show by our nervous excitement that we had a "scoop".

I don't think Wickham Steed had a great opinion of me as Rome correspondent of *The Times*. I did not take life and the Habsburgs sufficiently seriously and my ignorance was too patent. But now he would have to treat me with respect and even admiration. I burst triumphantly into his room.

He was working furiously at his desk and looked up

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at me almost with anger in his eyes, and Steed is a man who seldom loses his temper. "Here you are at last", he said. "On the one day above all others when we want all hands on deck."

I was too astonished even to blurt out a word about my scoop. There had been some misunderstanding, I discovered. The news that the Germans and Russians were to announce to the world the next morning had been issued at midday by the German delegation. For hours Sidebotham, Percy Philip and I had been the only journalists anywhere near Genoa who knew nothing about it.

* * *

That treaty of Rapallo had a sequel. Two or three of us were sitting in a café a few days later grumbling about the impossibility of covering adequately a conference whose delegates were straggled along some twenty-five miles of coast. At any moment some big story might "break" and only the lucky ones would hear about it, and once the secret treaty ramp had started every discontented government would be tempted to try it.

For want of something better to do, somebody jotted down on paper the outstanding clauses of a treaty such as Russia might be expected to sign with Hungary—he chose Hungary because it was almost the only country about which nobody had said anything since the beginning of the conference. He crumpled up the paper and left it on the table. Some other journalists turned up after we had left and in an hour the whole of Genoa was buzzing over this new treaty.

Was it true, the journalists asked Litvinoff, that

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Russia had signed a secret agreement with Hungary? She had not actually signed one, they were given to understand, but she might do so at any moment. They asked the same question of Count Bethlen, the Hungarian Premier. Hungary had signed no treaty with Russia, they were assured, but she would be quite happy to sign one with anybody else. I had some difficulty in convincing Wickham Steed, without giving away my own very small and indirect part in the affair, that the Russo-Hungarian rumour was not worthy of consideration in *The Times*. But I am sure that for some years afterwards there was a certain cordiality between the governments of Soviet Russia and of Hungary—two governments which would normally have been profoundly antipathetic to each other—owing to the existence of this non-existent secret treaty, invented by a few journalists who ought to have known better.

It is perhaps just as well that my editor knew nothing of my part-responsibility for that faked treaty because circumstances were combining to give me a very frivolous reputation. There was one restaurant, De Ferrari's, which was the haunt of the more important delegates at lunch time and of the more expensive dancing girls at night. I would finish telephoning our copy through to London by eleven, then came dinner and then, if I could slink out of the hotel unnoticed by Wickham Steed, came an hour or two at De Ferrari's with the younger and more cheery newspaper men.

But one evening when I was carrying on a conversation which seemed to me very profound and important—just across the square was the Genoa headquarters

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of the Russian delegation and it provided for so many of us the first contact with the new, mysterious, alarming but attractive business of Bolshevism that we could discuss it even above the drums and saxophones—there was a row at the next table.

The hero or villain of the trouble was Hank, an American who boasted that he bore on his person a scar for every peace conference he had attended since the war. I don't think he exaggerated and he was certainly doing his best to bring his average up that night. The manager was a gigantic fellow who had just seized Hank by the elbows and was about to hustle him out of the restaurant when a little Italian whose hair was waved in three tiers that rose from his forehead came up and decided that it was safe to hit his American rival very hard on the nose. He therefore did so.

Hell broke loose. It was Nordic versus Latin. Tables were overturned and glasses were thrown about. At some period of the battle an unpleasant youth hit me over the head with a broken Asti Spumante bottle. When the police turned up, I, who, on that occasion at least, had been entirely guiltless, was marched off as one of the three instigators of the riot, while the manager swore he would throw us out of his restaurant if we ever dared to enter it again. And the next morning I turned up covered with cotton wool and sticking plaster to discover Wickham Steed sitting up in bed in his scarlet dressing-gown reading a newspaper account of the disgraceful disturbance caused by some English and American journalists.

I was due to lunch that day at De Ferrari's with Count Bethlen and Count Banffy, Prime Minister and

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Foreign Minister of Hungary, and I dared not enter the place. Perhaps they could be persuaded to feed me elsewhere. I waited outside until they arrived and then put my case to them, but they had booked a table and invited other guests. There was nothing for it. As a guest I led the way into the restaurant and I hope never to forget the changes that passed over the manager's face when his obsequious smile of welcome to a newcomer became a scowl of rage when he saw who the newcomer was and again an obsequious smile when he saw that the other newcomers were two important ministers. The manager stood sideways to us as he took our order, for he had collected a magnificent black eye. Count Bethlen, a little maliciously, made a sympathetic enquiry about it. It was nothing, the manager explained with a bland-bitter smile—just a slight difference of opinion with some Americans.

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Three stories which have nothing to do with me except that I have met their heroes are going to be squeezed in here, for it would be a pity not to give them wider publicity. The first deals with a famous star reporter in the very early days of the *Daily Mail*. He was sent to cover one phase of the funeral of Queen Victoria, and long after he should have been back at the office news editors, sub-editors, night editors, and so on, were rushing around looking for him. Unfortunately, on his way home he had stopped for a drink or two. He turned up, elated with alcohol, only half an hour before the first edition had to go to press to catch the trains for the north. It would have been a terrible

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disaster for a paper like the *Daily Mail* to use a News Agency account of so tremendous an event. Charlie Long (which is as good a name for him as any other) asked how much time he had before his story must be ready. They explained as patiently as they could that half an hour was the maximum. He insisted that he should not be interrupted by those little messenger boys who come in to fetch a late story sheet by sheet, and throughout that anxious half-hour the night editor paced up and down the corridor outside the room with his watch in his hand. When he finally burst open the door he found Charlie Long sound asleep with his head on the table. All over the floor were bits of paper and on each sheet of paper was written the words: "Not since the days of Jesus Christ . . ." He had never got beyond that superb beginning. That was one of several occasions on which Charlie Long was sacked from his paper. Once when he was sent over to cover an important story in Dublin he disappeared for ten days or so. The first news that an anxious and angry office had about him was a telegram from him: "Am I still 'one of us'—Charlie Long". And Northcliffe always took him back.

There was another journalist, a very great man, who also was too fond of looking on the whiskey when it was yellow. He had worked for several unhappy years on the League of Nations Secretariat before he returned to Fleet Street. When the proprietor of his paper told him to go to Geneva to cover some important story he protested. He never wanted to visit the beastly city again. But with that particular proprietor protests

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were of no avail. John Walsh (and, again, the name is as good as any other) had to revisit the haunts of so many humiliations and so much unhappiness.

He was to leave London on a Tuesday and on the Thursday the paper waited for his first despatch. It did not come. The foreign editor telephoned to the Geneva hotel, but John Walsh had not arrived. Finally on the Saturday morning came a telegram from Sheffield. "Why am I here? John."

Then there was a famous American journalist whose despatches were so good that for years his paper paid his tremendous expense accounts without more than an occasional murmur. But once when he was living in Moscow the accountant could stand no more of it. He had a long argument with the editor who finally wrote to him to make a suggestion. The editor fully agreed that he must be treated on a financial footing different from other correspondents. But there were accountants to be satisfied. How would it be if, besides covering the whole of the Soviet Union, he were nominally to be made correspondent in Esthonia, Lithuania and Latvia as well. With so many capitals within his sphere the newspaper's directors would understand such large expenses.

The editor sent off this long letter delighted to have found so clever a solution of a problem which had worried him for years. In due course back came a cable from Moscow. "May I buy a bicycle?"

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THERE was, I think, only one occasion during the Genoa Conference when the vast majority of delegates was in agreement, and that was on the last morning. The principal trains left at lunch time and everybody wanted to get away as soon as possible from a lovely city which had been made hideous in our memories by so much stupidity and cowardice. Therefore there must be few concluding speeches.

Since there is not in fact that equality between states at which President Wilson aimed, it was taken for granted that the representatives of the Great Powers must each say his little piece, but they had arranged to be brief in the expression of their convictions that the world had made a great step forward towards peace—it was in any case such an obvious lie. Only two men from the smaller nations stood out from the mass of other delegates—M. Motta of Switzerland and Hr. Branting of Sweden, whose names had been coupled throughout the conference as those of the great defenders of democracy. (A colleague who was writing about them when he received a telegram of complaint from his office because his despatches were not more lively nearly lost his job by beginning his message with the words: “Motta and Branting, who,

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despite their names, are not two trick cyclists . . ."). But these two men were too disappointed to speak, and there seemed no reason to doubt that we should all catch our trains.

And then, just as we were expecting the chairman's valediction, M. Stambuliski, the wild-haired peasant Premier of Bulgaria, rose to his feet and began to speak in his native language. The sigh of dismay which went round the room changed quickly into one of relief when, after a very few words, he sat down again. But the charming daughter of the Bulgarian Minister in London had her job to do as interpreter to her delegation. In perfect French and perfect English she delivered very long speeches which, if they were accurate translations of her Premier's words, must prove Bulgarian to be a shorthand language which has its like nowhere in the world.

But the conference ended in time for the delegates to hurry home to their disillusioned masses and to the fates that awaited them. I happened recently to glance at a list of the principal delegates. Barthou—assassinated in Marseilles; Stambuliski—one of the first victims of that horrible and frequent formula, "shot while trying to escape"; Worowsky—shot in Lausanne by a man whom the smug Swiss turned into something of a national hero because he had killed a Bolshevik; Rathenau—murdered by the precursors of the Nazis; Gounaris—sentenced to death six months later for his failure to give Greece the victory in her war with Turkey.

Nobody could pretend that the first meeting after the war of all the nations which had taken part in it

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paved the way very far towards the avoidance of its repetition. It is remembered now, by those of us whose job it is to drift round from conference to conference, as one more step in a weary pilgrimage of disillusion. Had politicians been as ready at Genoa to forget political resentments as all but quite a small minority of their people is always prepared to do, we might so easily have had an economic recovery and have avoided that drift towards exaggerated enthusiasm which was so soon to turn nationalism into a religion.

Herr Hitler was still unknown except to a few dozen members of the new German National Socialist Workers' Party in Munich, but already Italy had been converted into a battlefield, and every Sunday Fascists drove round the countryside in motor lorries firing at their enemies. The conference did nothing to stem the drift towards economic chaos or to encourage public confidence in the statesmanship of democratic politicians. Hitherto democracy had seen only one enemy on the horizon, and the fear of Bolshevism had led to one or two small concessions (such as the establishment by the peace treaty of a special International Labour Office designed to convince the workers that their employers loved them) and to many political intolerances (such as M. Barthou's snubs to M. Tchicherin and M. Litvinoff at Genoa). But now nationalism began to express quite as blunt a contempt for our conceptions of liberty, freedom, democracy and so on as Bolshevism had ever done. And since it was so much more respectable to endanger one's country by an excess of nationalism than by an excess of international brotherly love the new cult found many supporters.

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The Genoa Conference, as I see it, marked the end of the passive period, during which we slowly recovered from the numbing effect of the war, and the beginning of a new period of activity during which this struggle between nationalism and internationalism became yearly more acute. Mussolini came into power at the same time as the League of Nations put Austria on her financial feet by an impressive piece of international co-operation. Few people at the time reflected that the financial recovery of a country dismembered as Austria had been by the peace was much less important than her spiritual recovery which the Great Powers had prevented when they forbade the union with Germany and which her small neighbours helped to prevent by their understandable but unwise revenge against the Habsburg tradition. They had been bossed about from Vienna, and Vienna was going to suffer for it now, although the men who had done the bossing were in exile.

And few people at that time realised that Signor Mussolini was going to stay in power for years and to influence civilisation almost as much as Lenin had done. I am ashamed to say that I once was proud of coining a contemptuous description of him in *The Times* as "this cinema Napoleon" and that I fully believed all the reports about his imminent death from one of half a dozen fatal maladies from which he was said to be suffering.

But for nearly ten years after the Genoa Conference those of us who, in the mud of Flanders or the snows of Russia or the parched deserts of Mesopotamia, had seen visions of a world in which this senseless fighting

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would disappear nourished high hopes. There were such glorious moments.

* * *

There have been occasions which I could wish to remember long after a failing memory has erased from my mind the recollection of many bitternesses and disillusion. There was an evening when I stood on the South Downs near a group of beeches known as Bishop's Clump, and looked northwards over the lovely English countryside to where heavy black clouds hung above the distant hills. Near us the sun still shone on the masses of flowering willow herb and the rabbits potted about as though we did not exist or were just a natural and normal part of it all. Never before or since have I had such a feeling of "belonging", and I would not wish to forget it.

There was a bathe, when I was quite a small boy, in one of those North Devon coves where I could float on my back and see the shining yellow sand, the black rocks brushed over with the orange of samphire, the deep green of the woods coming right down to the water's edge and, through one small gap in the hills, the lazy purple of the heather-covered moor.

And on a level with such memories stands the memory of the day when Germany entered the League of Nations. I had seen that country, where I had been so happy and so well received, pass through such hardships and so much ill-treatment. Here at last was proof that Germany was put back on a footing of equality with the other nations of the world, that she had expiated her crime of 1914. Her entry into the

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League had been delayed for months by a dirty piece of intrigue to pack the Council with powers who could be trusted to be unfriendly to her, but on that day such warnings were forgotten.

How could one remember them while Aristide Briand, with that large leonine head on little student's shoulders and spindly legs, thrust the cannon and the machine guns behind him and promised us a new era of peace. "Arrière les fusils, arrière les canons, arrière les mitrailleuses", boomed that great voice, "Place à la conciliation, à l'arbitrage, à la paix."

I had left *The Times* job in Rome six months after the Genoa Conference and a few days after Mussolini had become Premier. With that luck which had hitherto made my life so relatively easy, a new job had offered itself to me just when I was growing tired of the old one. Steed and *The Times* had parted company and I had been too closely associated with the former at Genoa to believe that my prospects with the paper were very good. Besides, I could not have stayed on in Rome during Fascism and there was a nasty rumour that I was to go to Paris as second man. And while I wondered what to do I received a telegram telling me that the directorship of the London Office of the League Secretariat was vacant. It was filled by me, not because of my merits but because it was thought that I should have a favourable influence with *The Times* when League news was sent out to the British Press.

And so I had acquired the right to listen to League Assembly speeches not from the press gallery, but from a platform just behind the speakers and just in front of an immense curtain of sackcloth. But when-

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ever Briand spoke I waived that right. I dared not sit in any prominent position. Instead I stood out of sight behind the sackcloth curtain, for there was a certain timbre about his voice and, I am convinced, a certain sincerity which moved me to tears as inevitably as certain chords from an organ make the church windows rattle.

But poor Herr Stresemann could not have that effect upon his listeners, and I came out from behind my curtain to hear him. The German Foreign Minister seemed to be entirely unmoved. Only those who came close enough to see how much humour and intelligence sparkled out of those little piggy eyes ever learnt to appreciate him. On the platform he appeared as a stolid man with rolls of fat across the nape of his neck and with a harsh metallic voice. The delegates did not see, as I saw, the little streams of perspiration trickling down through his sparse yellowish hair. They did not know, as I did, that just before his turn came to speak he said to a friend that he would never be able to go through with it.

There was one speech Stresemann made in Geneva which moved even those who understood no word of German. It was delivered at a luncheon of the International Association of Journalists a few months before he died. Everybody knew he was doomed and disappointed. Throughout his career as Foreign Minister the ex-Allies had helped him much less than they had helped Herr Hitler. And at that luncheon we listened to a man who knew he was defeated. We knew, also, that his defeat was our defeat. With him died perhaps not the last, but certainly the most

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promising, hope of making a durable European peace. He did not die only of overwork and a broken heart, for I once saw him eat at least half a pound of caviare at the beginning of a large meal when he was already under the strictest medical orders to be moderate. But we cannot still our consciences with the excuse that Stresemann was greedy.

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Inevitably the League has appeared to be dull, respectable, uninspiring. So much more effort is needed to see the ghosts that hover around the millions of signatures on petitions from every part of the world that reached Geneva at the opening of the Disarmament Conference than those which remind us of centuries of warlike tradition when we watch the changing of the guard on Horse Guards Parade ("The only place in the world", as an American girl once said to me, "where they have sentry boxes for horses."). A pompous old general with a Sam Browne belt round his ample middle looks so much more romantic than a pompous old statesman in a black coat and striped trousers.

But the pompous old statesmen have sometimes had to deal with such issues that even their most mumbled speeches became dramatic. The whispers of M. Yoshizawa, the Japanese delegate at the time of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, echoed round the world. For it was obvious to so many of us that a failure to enforce the law in Manchuria would encourage other law-breakers elsewhere to defy the League and destroy the hope of peace.

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Even the long-winded little M. Waldemaras of Lithuania sometimes achieved dignity in his dispute with Poland after the Polish military occupation of Vilna. And the Hungarian optants—Hungarians in Transylvania who had the right to choose between Hungarian and Roumanian nationality after the territory had been transferred to Roumanian rule—could for years pack the glass-sided dining-room of the ex-Hotel National in Geneva where the League Council used to meet.

In those days the Council table was a big circular affair at which the representatives of the two parties to a dispute were separated only by the interpreter. And those two representatives were the tall, Roman-nosed old Count Apponyi of Hungary and the ebullient and brilliant M. Titulescu of Roumania. They would say such insulting things about each other that one almost feared for the safety of the interpreter who sat between them. Few people had ever worried about an optant before, but we were all turned into experts on minorities, treaties, ethnography and demography before that dispute, by the League process of attrition, was finally settled and removed from the agenda.

(No, we were not all experts. Geoffrey Dennis, winner of the Hawthornden Prize and author of a notable and notorious book of 1937 on coronations, was the chief English translator at the time, and one stenographer who had been taking down at his dictation came out of his room bewildered and disillusioned. "I thought Captain Dennis was supposed to be literary", she complained. "But he has just dictated something about people who hopped it for

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Hungary, and he even dropped the 'h' in front of 'hopped'.")

When the Council outgrew its first premises its members sat round a horseshoe table, with the disputing parties as far away from each other as possible. Now that it has been transferred to its grand new building the members all sit in a row facing the audience. With each change, there has been less frank and honest discussion and more fear of the criticism of the gallery, and the result is that there is now virtually no public debate. Delegates make or mumble set speeches agreeing with the previous speaker; if anyone wants to disagree he demands a private meeting.

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As great a drawback as the fact that Council decisions are now reached in private and merely announced in public is the fact that they have to be announced in both the official languages of the League, English and French. Occasionally other languages are used. The Germans, starting with Herr Stresemann, always spoke in German, and when the Irish Free State was admitted to membership President Cosgrave made his opening speech in Gaelic, to the dismay of some members of his delegation who had no idea what he was talking about. On such occasions the bored audience has to listen to the translation in both the official languages, and the delegates who grumble most are often those who are most indignant should their own language be skimmed or omitted.

Geneva's best-known British interpreter, Captain Alec Russell, once did his best to speed up proceedings.

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He had been translating all the morning for a very dull committee whose chairman was a very polite Frenchman. When the luncheon hour drew near, the chairman looked very discreetly at his watch and then said, in French, something to this effect:—"Gentlemen, we have listened this morning to a number of very interesting speeches, and I am sure you would all like some time in which to think over the very important ideas that have been put before you. As our work is of such importance that we ought to meet again early this afternoon, I would suggest—if you all agree—that we should now adjourn."

Alec Russell, who was a little less polite or a little more hungry, was short and to the point. "The chairman", he declared, "says if we don't adjourn now we shall be late for lunch".

But unfortunately no delegate likes his own speech to be so perfectly interpreted. On that occasion, if on no other, he would like a long and literal translation. He would prefer the services of another interpreter who can listen to the longest speech without making a note, who can then translate it sentence by monotonous sentence, but who has no recollection when it is all over what the meeting has been about. Still more, he would like exhaustive reports of his declaration to be published in the newspapers at home. One Latin-American who knew that his election as President of the League Assembly was almost inevitable—although Heaven knows that many people had tried hard to avoid it—carefully handed out to the news agencies advance copies of a speech in which he expressed his great astonishment that the governments of the world

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should have conferred this honour upon him.

One of his colleagues went still further in his kindly forethought for the poor hard-working journalist. In the advance copies of his speech he had inserted occasional comments in brackets. "Applause", "Loud cheers", and all the rest of it. And nobody laughed the pompous little brute out of Geneva.

* * *

The first time I went to a League of Nations meeting I shared a sleeping compartment from Paris with a Foreign Minister from one of the new countries in Eastern Europe. The compartment was abominably hot and stuffy, for my companion had carefully closed the windows and the ventilators, and I was abominably thirsty. At one moment during the night I decided that I must at all costs get a drink. I did not want to disturb my distinguished neighbour, so without turning on the light I climbed down from my upper berth, had my drink and climbed back again. But as soon as I had returned to my bed he turned on the light and went very carefully and very ostentatiously through all his pockets to see what I had stolen. If this was the measure of the international trust and confidence I was to find at Geneva, I told myself, the prospects for the League were not very bright.

But at that time my ideas about the League of Nations were pretty vague. I imagined then that the League was a sort of fairy godmother who, with a wave of a wand, was able to settle the disputes of the world's politicians. I almost imagined that when the Secretary-General pressed an electric button in his study auto-

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matically troops appeared from all the states members of the League to punish some country that was getting out of hand. I imagined that every politician automatically became rather angelic when he stepped out of the train in Geneva. I had not then realised that there is nothing, that there could be nothing, about the League Covenant that could make it a cure for all the political and economic ailments in the world.

It was a depressing business learning that the pace of the League is that of its slowest government, that a delegate to the Assembly is just as likely to defend his narrow national interests as is the delegate to any other international conference. There was, one discovered, only one advantage which the League had over all other conferences, and it was that nearly every session, at any rate in the early days, was held in public. No delegate will willingly defend a policy which he knows to be unjust, wrong and cowardly if he has to do so in the presence of some four hundred newspaper men representing the public opinion of the whole world. This is—or, alas, was—the one great advantage of the League of Nations, the one great approach to President Wilson's "open Covenant openly arrived at".

League enthusiasts blame its failures on the evil machinations of governments and diplomats. They want statesmen who indulge in the most undignified intrigues to avoid war even for some immediate national end to be prepared and able at any time to drag their people into international war in defence of the Covenant, a document not one man in ten thousand has ever read. League enemies blame its failures on its lack of "realism", the clumsiness of its Covenant, the

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sentimentality of its supporters, or any other lying argument that comes into their heads. (As though anybody could be more sentimental than the man who gets angry when a foreigner criticises the English climate, or less realistic than the man who claims to be a patriot but who talks about the glories of war!)

There are two causes of the League's decadence which nobody seems to remember but which are nevertheless very important. The first is the choice of Geneva as its home. President Wilson meant well when he insisted on some neutral city instead of Brussels or Vienna or Paris, but we all know where good intentions lead to. Many a bored member of the Secretariat has wondered whether there can be any great difference between Geneva and Hell. Here is a city beautiful but smug, placed miles away from a main railway line or from a main road from anywhere to anywhere. Its theatres and concerts are rare and seldom good. Whatever you do, wherever you go, you are bound to meet your own colleagues. You ski with them, you swim with them, you eat and drink with them. They are a bunch of men and women of mixed origins and mixed nationalities. That they co-operate so well, forgetful of the barriers of language, religion and nationality, is one of the encouraging miracles of our time. But they can never hope to escape from "shop". No visitor ever comes to Geneva except to see the League at work. In Brussels, Vienna or any other city in Europe there would have been some distraction, some other intellectual interest, something which prevented members of the Secretariat from looking at the world through League eyes—and forgetting that the great mass of

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mankind goes through the opposite performance.

Never have I seen so much devotion to duty go waste. One of the many secretaries who had a nervous breakdown once locked herself in a lavatory in the League building and could on no account be persuaded to leave it. Just when it had been decided to break the door down a friend of hers came along the passage. She had a bright idea. She knocked urgently on the door and told her friend that her chief, Erik Colban, now Norwegian Minister in London, had an important letter to dictate. At once the door was opened. And the unfortunate secretary came out ready to take down still more letters to still more governments that would file them and then forget about them.

If I wanted or were able to write an intellectual study of disillusionment I should make my heroine a secretary on the League Secretariat. Shortly after the war these girls had a grand time. It was so difficult to find enough of them with an adequate knowledge of languages that they received very high pay. They went on from Versailles to a long series of other conferences to rectify the worst blunders of the Versailles Treaty. And in those days Congress danced. At Barcelona, Spa, Boulogne, San Remo, and all the rest of them there were banquets and excursions. Even in the early days at Geneva the French delegation would bring opera singers from Paris for its Assembly reception. Night after night there would be some "do" which looked thrilling and gay, since the men wore colours almost as bright as those of the ladies, even though they confined them to medals, ribbons round their necks or sashes across their stomachs.

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But bit by bit financial control became stricter and work became more strenuous. Decisions had to be reached in a hurry and the secretaries had to work late at night. My answer to newcomers to Geneva who suggested leeringly that the girls must have a damned good time of it was to take them past the League building in the early hours of the morning, when at least the top floor would still be lit up and you could stand outside in the street and hear the rustle of all the typewriters preparing reports for the delegates at the next meeting.

Dances and dinners disappeared. Receptions were looked upon as bad form. The typists were first relegated to a "pool" at the top of the building, from which they would come to take down a few letters on such varied subjects as the progress of arbitration, the incidence of malaria in Jugoslavia, the treatment of minorities in Roumania, the conditions of traffic in China, or the advisability of a close season for whale fishing. In other words, they lost most of their interest in work and they had less and less contact with the outside world. After a year or two they were even moved to another building altogether, to the very great disappointment of the elderly delegates, mostly Latin-Americans, who used to stand around in the main hall at about six o'clock when the typists would troop down the staircase in their summer frocks with the evening sun streaming through the great windows behind them.

The hours are reasonable and the pay is good enough to discourage anybody from chucking up the work and returning to the uncertainties of a crowded London employment market. And so, for year after year, you

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have that rather pathetic crowd of secretaries passing four times a day through the streets of Geneva on their way to or from the great new peace palace on the hill.

On the first night of the first League Assembly I found my way to a dreary night club. All I remember of it is a notice declaring that, as a compliment to the League, it would remain open until three o'clock instead of two. But even that delicate compliment could never convince me that Geneva is anything but one of the dullest cities in Europe. There is an important treaty between Germany and Poland which is known as "*le traité de Chez Maxim*" but the only reason for a name which brings before the mind's eye visions of elegant young diplomats and beautiful spies in dresses which fit them like sheaths was that the men who were drafting it had been working so late that no food was available elsewhere and because, on arrival there, somebody remembered that the treaty had been adopted but not initialled, and brought out of his pocket a copy which was signed as soon as the dancing girls and sweet champagne could be cleared out of the way.

The other handicap is that no covenant is now openly arrived at—the mixture between the old and new diplomacy which obtains in Geneva is so bad that the League's most loyal supporters begin to wonder if, apart from its technical work, it is not doing more harm than good.

This is, for the moment, what happens. Journalists from every part of the world collect in Geneva to follow the words and deeds of the Foreign Ministers of the day. Hour after hour they have nothing to do but to wander up and down the long corridors discussing rumours and

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occasionally starting them. The more irresponsible of them have been known to invent some fantastic report in order to bet on the period that will elapse before a recognisable version of it comes back to them. Somewhere in the building the members of the Council, or three or four of them, are holding a very important meeting. They are sworn to secrecy. Only those who have axes to grind are going to break their oaths. Unfortunately, there are many grinders of axes, and no journalist in the world, however anxious he may be to further the cause of peace, can avoid becoming a public danger in such circumstances. He has the interests of his paper to serve. Somehow and somewhere he must get his information. The best that he can hope to do is to get it from as many different sources as possible, so that he can decide with some confidence how much of it is true.

During the preliminary discussions for the Locarno Conference M. Briand and Sir Austen Chamberlain gave a joint interview to the press after one such secret discussion. Briand dealt with us brilliantly but told us nothing. When he was about to dismiss us he turned to one German journalist and said: "Je vois que vous avez encore des réserves, Monsieur Beer", and received a quick and apt reply: "Pas autant que vous, Monsieur le Président". But at least Briand did give information whenever it was advisable, and considered the press as an ally and not an enemy. Not all his colleagues have been so wise.

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Faced with all these handicaps, the League propa-

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gandist has no easy time of it. For years after I came to London as a member of the Secretariat I resented all pressure to try to "put it across" from the public platform. I did not see how it could be made to sound as interesting as I knew it to be. My first experiment at public speaking should have kept me off platforms for the rest of my life. I was induced to speak at a meeting in the north of London. There would be, I was told, somewhere about three hundred people present, and day after day when I was shaving or had other moments to spare I would picture to myself an audience of some three hundred. I would bellow my peroration in my bath. When the night arrived I found myself in a small parish room with an audience of just over thirty. At one end of the room was a nice little stove. And the other end of the room was filled with glacial fog. Outside icicles hung from the windows, for it was one of the coldest nights that London had known for years. Unfortunately, the stove was not at my end of the room and I concluded that it would look rather bad if I, the principal speaker, put on my overcoat. I sat by the local parson who was in the chair, and trembled with mingled panic and cold until my turn came to speak.

I tried to comfort myself with the reflection that after I had made my little speech I should be all right, because, when people asked questions, they would be asking them about my own subject and I should know the answers better than they did. I stumbled through my talk with very indifferent success, and as I rose to answer my first question I began to hiccough. For four days and five nights I hiccoughed. The doctor

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told me it was some form of influenza which was taking people off to their graves by the dozen. But the meeting broke up in disorder, the clergyman-chairman showed the most uncharitable suspicions about the cause of the complaint, and I have so far met with no illness which was so dangerous but won so little sympathy.

My first appearance as a lecturer in the United States was scarcely more encouraging. I was to speak on Armistice Sunday at a church in Toledo, Ohio. Owing to some muddle with my lecture agency my train arrived just before the meeting was due to begin, and I found nobody upon the station platform to meet me. They had already given me up for lost. I reached the church in a taxi and before I had time to look around they dressed me up in a cassock and a surplice. Then with priests of every denomination I had to take part in a procession. In front of me were little girls in white carrying flags of every nation. Next to me was the Greek Archimandrite (or whatever the gentleman should be called), bearded and magnificent. I had not recovered from my preliminary bewilderment when the signal was given for me to mount the pulpit. Being nervous and unaccustomed to wearing anything in the nature of skirts, I trod on my cassock and landed in the pulpit on my stomach.

And yet, despite all the speeches that have been made, all the articles that have been written, the League is still so little understood that its survival is a miracle. Even today thousands of people will claim that they are members of the League because they pay their shillings to join the League of Nations Union (a

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member of the Navy League might just as well claim that he belonged to the British Navy). Even today scores of people will think it a pity that the League contains so many foreigners. Even today there are strange patriots who would rather see their country collapse in solitude than save itself by co-operation with other countries. Millions still refuse to realise that the League is only a Club of which governments, including their own, are members, and that it is as futile and unfair to attack the League as it would be to attack a Club because one or two members misbehaved.

When first I had dealings with the League of Nations its Secretariat worked in an hotel and its Assembly in a revolting and ill-ventilated hall on the other side of the lake. But at that time the Secretariat was buzzing with enthusiasm, and the Assembly aroused such interest that streets had to be roped off to keep the crowd back and flags of every conceivable nationality hung from hotel windows. Now the Secretariat works in one of the most magnificent buildings in Europe—despite the fact that it was built by five architects of different nationalities whose efforts to agree were accompanied by such bitter quarrels that one always knew from the noise they were making in what room they were meeting—and everything has been done to give dignity to the Council and the Assembly. Even peacocks stalk about the grounds and dangerously leave their messes on the steps by which the delegates reach the Council room. But in the old uncomfortable days one was filled with optimism and courage; now, sitting in one's comfortable

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arm-chair in this Council room, one sometimes wonders whether this new League building is anything more than a magnificent tomb for a great idea.

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One can still find some encouragement in contrasting a League Conference with the much greater secrecy that marks meetings held under other auspices. The Stresa Conference of 1935, for example, was the best example I have yet come across of the ridiculous and dangerous mixture between old and new diplomacy to which our Foreign Ministers have now become so attached. It met to deal with Germany's refusal to be bound any longer by the disarmament clauses of the Versailles Treaty. There was a good deal of talk about the League of Nations, but no meeting more out of touch with the League of Nations spirit could ever be held. As for "open Covenants openly arrived at", so great was the fear of publicity that the delegates met on an island a hundred yards from the shore.

The delegations were preceded by the Secret Police. They visited every villa in the neighbourhood to make sure that no dangerous subjects were living there. Curious individuals with long iron spikes went round the gardens of the hotel where Mr Eden, M. Flandin and other important delegates were to stay—Signor Mussolini himself thought it best to stay on the island—and dug these spikes into the flower-beds just to make sure that no bombs were hidden there. Seedy-looking gentlemen with unfurled umbrellas and worn-down heels were to be found in every gateway between the hotel and the jetty from which the delegates went to the

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island. On one occasion with a small parcel of books in my hand I walked down as near the jetty as I could, eyed suspiciously by all these plain clothes policemen, and when I got there I stooped down to tie up my shoe lace. Purposely I left the parcel on the ground and began to walk away. A dozen men jumped at me, and I should have been in for trouble had my press card not been in my hand in preparation for it. As it was, they reluctantly accepted my assurance that I was carrying books and not bombs and my thanks for calling attention to my forgetfulness.

I was once the fortunate witness of the changing of the plain clothes policemen guard. Signor Mussolini was expected on shore to attend a banquet at the hotel. About three-quarters of an hour before his arrival I was walking along the road when I met some fifty men coming along almost, but not quite, in military formation. A certain shiftiness and shabbiness about their appearance told me who they were. I reversed our usual rôles and watched them from behind a wall. When they came near the hotel they divided into two groups. There was, just near the road, a tremendous tree with branches that came completely down to the ground. Half of the men filed solemnly under this tree. The other half went on equally solemnly and found concealment in a neighbouring coppice. The idea of grown men hiding in this way when there were no children about was so comical that I came nearer to arrest on that occasion than I have done for some considerable time.

There was, during the Stresa Conference, not a single public meeting. From ten in the morning until two in

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the morning we loafed around in search of crumbs of information which, washed down with drinks at the bar, did no good to our digestions. At the end of the meetings an extremely colourless *communiqué* was issued and Ramsay MacDonald gave the most unintelligible talk to the press that I have ever heard. Neither Mr MacDonald, the Prime Minister, or Sir John Simon, the Foreign Secretary, once mentioned Signor Mussolini's obvious preparations for war in Abyssinia, although the Foreign Office Abyssinia expert was a member of the British delegation. Unable to believe that this silence was due to cowardice rather than to benevolent neutrality, the Italian Government sent more troops, and became so involved that it could not have drawn back later on in the year without a cracking humiliation. Italy could then win her struggle against the League because she was absolutely desperate.

And that was all! Scores of journalists had waited around for fourteen hours a day, never daring to go out into God's sunshine for more than a few minutes lest they should miss a "story". Newspapers had spent hundreds of pounds on cable tolls and travelling expenses. I had watched while lovable colleagues turned slowly into despairing or angry bundles of nerves as they waited for their telephone calls to the office to be put through with the help of those ever-admirable women, the telephonists. Thousands of words of speculation and rumour and hundreds of words of hard but unimportant fact—the Duce's meals or Mr Eden's interviews—went over the wires each night in at least a dozen languages. And all that we journalists were supposed to know of the meeting was contained in that

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one absurd *communiqué*. Small wonder that the only achievement of the Stresa Conference was the adoption of a completely negative resolution accusing Germany of wickedness in tearing up a page of the treaty but neither warning her that she would not be allowed to do so again nor opening up to her the least hope that other pages could be altered by negotiation.

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There was a time when politicians and the press (and, through the press, the public) worked in close co-operation in Geneva, and that was the time when the League had a favourable balance-sheet. That was the time before we were turned, against our will, into sensation-mongers. That was the time when M. Briand was able to drive a Greek army out of Bulgaria in a few hours by stating boldly and in public that action would be taken if the Covenant were not respected. That was the time when Lord Cecil compelled Signor Mussolini to put an end to the Italian occupation of Corfu by his solemn reading in public of the articles of the Covenant which pledged members of the League to take action against an aggressor. That was the time!

And yet that time might return. In the last few years we have had many disgraceful acts of cowardice, but also one magnificent justification of the League. Twice in Geneva, where good feeling is supposed to reign, I have felt those hot rushes of blood to the head which I experience, to a lesser degree, when people will stand on a busy pavement to gossip or on the wrong side of the escalator and so prevent other passengers from

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passing (I hate travelling by Bakerloo from Waterloo to Charing Cross because there is a staircase where people are urged to keep to the left, frequently keep to the right instead, and put me in so bad temper that I purposely bump into them as I come up the stairs and they go down them).

There was the afternoon in September 1936 when that small, dignified little Emperor of Abyssinia mounted the Assembly platform to make one more appeal to those governments whose hesitations had helped so little to prevent the invasion of his country. One might justifiably feel that Abyssinia was far too backward ever to have been granted admission to the League; one might argue, as that kindly and charming old talker George Bernard Shaw has done, that, in the long run, this great area of Africa had to be controlled and developed by some European Power. But, whatever one felt about the invasion of Abyssinia—and my own feelings cannot be expressed in polite language—it was surely impossible not to respect the dignity shown throughout by the Emperor and not to feel wild indignation against the Italian journalists who, acting on instructions, interrupted his opening words with hisses and whistles. Had I been near enough, I, an opponent of physical force as a method of argument, should certainly have hit out at my Italian colleagues, outnumbered though they were.

That night I dreamt I was back at school and had been caned by the headmaster for some unspecified crime. The reason for the dream was obvious. I had applauded with such vehemence when the Italians were ejected that my hands were as swollen and painful as if

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I had been given six cuts with the cane on each of them.

More bitter still was the afternoon when Herr Greiser, President of the Senate of the Free City of Danzig, cocked his famous snook at the press gallery. It occurred only a day or two after the Emperor of Abyssinia business and nerves were still a little on edge. Everything about Herr Greiser was provocative, especially the way in which, after a long and insulting speech, he threw his papers down on the table with a: "And there you have it!"

There was a long adjournment, during which the League Assembly met to carry the Abyssinian affair one more step towards its miserable close and Herr Greiser had nothing to do but sit at the bar and allow his resentment against the League to develop. His statements, when the meeting began again, were even more outrageous and there were muttered protests from the press gallery. There should not have been, but no man could have done more to deserve them.

At last the Danzig question was over and the President of the Senate left the Council table. He gave the Nazi salute to so many people, including Mr Eden, who, as Chairman, had already gone on to the next item on the agenda, that the journalists laughed. As Herr Greiser, followed by his burly bodyguard, strode out of the room he very deliberately cocked his snook.

There was an undignified uproar. Robert Dell, that vigorous old correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, who has spent most of a lifetime in France but whose French accent is still an atrocity, jumped to his feet and shouted in that language to his own

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Foreign Secretary: "Cet homme, il a fait comme cela", and, in his turn, cocked a snook at the honourable members of the Council. Anthony Eden, as Chairman of the Council, appealed to people to pay no attention to a gesture he himself had not seen. There was a migration to the lobby to see what had become of Herr Greiser, while the Council went on quietly to discuss the report of the Health Committee or some such uncontroversial subject.

The President of the Danzig Senate was standing with his companions in the doorway to the press room, so that the journalists had almost to squeeze past him to get in or out. No man ever turned the simple process of lighting a cigarette into a more insulting gesture. Some of my colleagues were shouting that he should be thrown out. Others—and I was among them—were shouting equally excitedly that it was important not to get excited, since there was obviously nothing Herr Greiser wanted more than that they should do so. For ten minutes or so there was an atmosphere of anger and tension the like of which I had never known, and then a Czechoslovak official who tactfully talked to the President of the Danzig Senate about their experiences in common during the Great War persuaded him to leave the building. League ushers joined hands at the top of the staircase to prevent any of us from using force to hasten his exit. Nearly an hour later I went to the bar to get a drink and my hand was still trembling so much with nervous excitement that I spilled half of it.

Obviously the League would have become worse than useless if it did nothing but provide occasions for such displays of bad manners and bad tempers. But there

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have been, even since the conflict between Fascism and Democracy became acute, moments which reminded one how great a part it still might play in world affairs.

* * *

One afternoon in December 1934, I received a summons to visit Sir John Simon (then Foreign Secretary, and known to everybody in the Foreign Office by the ironical nickname of "Battling Jack Simon") in his room at the House of Commons. Knowing how much my editor and I would approve of the scheme, he explained to me with admirable clarity a plan which young Anthony Eden, then Minister for League of Nations Affairs, was at that moment putting before the League Council in Geneva for the despatch of British and other "neutral" troops to the Saar Basin to supervise the plebiscite there. Then "Battling Jack" held a general press reception, where he was less sure of a favourable audience, and made the most lamentable and hesitating speech imaginable. Of course, he said, he didn't know what Mr Eden might be proposing, but it was just possible that he might have in mind some vague scheme which would involve a certain amount of British responsibility for the plebiscite. Everyone was mystified and a little angry, but next day, when the press had been almost unanimous in welcoming the proposal, Sir John Simon was as admirably clear in explaining further details as he had been with me the evening before.

But one should not be too astonished by the Foreign Secretary's hesitations, for the scheme was yet one more of those international innovations whose frequency

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since the war ought so to have encouraged us. At least once in each century since Julius Caesar was in England British troops had gone overseas to fight; never before have they, or any other troops, taken part in international police work on that scale.

There was, at that time, no more dangerous area in the world than the Saar Basin. One forgets far too quickly how serious are the problems men have solved and remembers only those that still defy solution. A population that was almost entirely German but whose workers were mostly in coal-mines that had been made the property of France. An area which had become the headquarters of thousands of German refugees working against Hitler. A plebiscite which the whole world looked upon as a test case in the struggle between National Socialism and Democracy. A tremendous press campaign outside Germany against Nazi attempts to terrorise or influence the voters. An equally vehement campaign inside Germany against French attempts to achieve the same end. There were all the makings of a first-class international row and I am absolutely convinced that the plebiscite could not have taken place without bloodshed had foreign troops not been there.

And instead, after the result was out, British soldiers were cheered wherever they appeared in the streets of Saarbrücken. The Italians were less popular, for they committed the folly on their arrival of marching from the station with fixed bayonets as though they were an army of occupation instead of a police force to co-operate with the people in assuring them a square deal. But the Dutch and the Swedes, the other contingents of

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that astonishing peace army, were treated with gratitude.

On the night before the plebiscite I went over to a village near the German border. It had been snowing heavily but on every hill-top in Germany great bonfires blazed. Outside almost every house in Saar territory were coloured lights, and Christmas trees were stuck in the snow along each village street. Coming up the Moselle valley from Coblenz I had overtaken train after train crowded with Saarlanders returning from Germany to vote. "*Deutsch die Saar!*" was chalked up on every wall. It was clear that the Saar population, whatever it thought of Hitler, remembered above all that it was German.

There was one brief period during the plebiscite day which will remain vividly in the memories of those of us who were there. Anything in the nature of a demonstration had been strictly forbidden. But after the poll had closed a tremendous crowd gathered outside the Town Hall while the voting urns were carried down the steps to the army lorries that were to take them to the Wartburg to be counted. Hundreds of arms went out in the Hitler salute, hundreds of voices yelled the *Horst Wessel Lied* or *Deutschland über Alles*. Reasoned argument would have had as little effect on that mass of people standing in the slush and saluting with religious intensity the dustbin-like voting urns as it would have had on statues in a gallery. Nobody who saw the faces of that crowd, lit up by the flares of the cinema operators, could ever again dismiss the German cult of "*Blut und Boden*" as nonsense. I would to God that the

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cult of universal peace had an appeal one quarter so powerful.

The British troops had their orders—nobody was to come near enough to the voting urns to interfere with them. British bayonets were drawn to defend this expression of German people's will. For a quarter of an hour as the mob surged round the lorries with their loads of votes there was every possibility of a crisis. Some young soldier, failing to realise the fanatical feelings aroused by the sight of these metal boxes, might so easily have become too officious.

And when tension was at its highest I saw a German press photographer asking a British sergeant to hold his cap over the camera to shield it from the flares while the film pack was being changed. Then I had to lend my pencil to the sergeant while he wrote the address to which the German could send him prints of his photographs. Then the business of dealing with the precious urns went on in better humour.

Late the next afternoon, M. Rodhe, the Swedish President of the Saar Plebiscite Commission, ended a brief speech with the words: "The counting begins", and thereby condemned three hundred and fifty international officials to the strangest night of incarceration any of them is ever likely to know. Throughout that night a British sentry with fixed bayonet marched up and down in front of the Wartburg and each of us who was privileged to go up to the gallery was carefully searched for arms.

Below us, on the floor of the hall, were about sixty large kitchen tables with the sealed voting urns standing beside them. The moment the president gave the

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word the seals were broken and blue voting envelopes were poured on to the tables. Within an hour everybody was in in his shirt-sleeves, the floor was strewn with blue envelopes, and the ballot papers were being arranged in three piles—an impressive one of those in favour of reunion with Germany, a small one of those in favour of the prolongation of the existing autonomy under a League of Nations Governing Commission, and an occasional vote for union with France. The French delegation to Versailles had at one time impressed President Wilson and Mr Lloyd George with a document stating that there were a hundred and fifty thousand Frenchmen in the Saar Basin; two thousand voted for France on January 13th, 1935.

Almost until dawn we in the press gallery peered down at these voting papers, trying to gauge the percentage of German votes which was to indicate in world public opinion the victory or defeat of Fascism. Then we turned in for an hour or two, until the rejoicings in the street told us how great a victory Nationalism and Nazi propaganda had gained. One great London paper forecast a mere 40 per cent for Hitler. Unofficial estimates put it at 70 per cent. I predicted 88 per cent, and was still 2 per cent behind the facts.

Demonstrations were forbidden after the poll as before it. The ban could no more have been enforced after this victory than King Knut could have checked the incoming tide. In an hour or two traffic along the main street had become impossible. Processions, flags, red, white and black streamers, swastikas, portraits of Adolf Hitler were everywhere. *Deutsch die Saar!*

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There were foreign observers who wandered around in deep gloom which contrasted with the general enthusiasm. They were depressed because an absurd and immoral attempt to rob Germany of German territory had failed and, in failing, had given yet more strength to the man whom their treaty had helped to power. They found in the plebiscite and its results another defeat for democracy and international order.

But it was in reality a great and striking victory. That Germans should have voted for Germany, whatever its form of government, was so much less important than that, for the first time, an international police force should have maintained perfect order during as difficult and critical a period as any Europe has known since the Peace Conference. *That* was the victory!

God knows, there have been enough defeats in Geneva to discourage the wildest idealists. And yet each defeat only emphasises the grim reality upon which the Covenant is founded—that unless men learn to co-operate along lines very close to those laid down in that maligned document their civilisation cannot last. And there is the encouraging fact that, when they do so co-operate, they can perform miracles.

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I HAVE written and spoken a great deal at different times about the tremendous importance to the human race of the development of broadcasting. I have explained to my own, if to nobody else's, satisfaction that the microphone must have a far greater influence on history than did the discovery of printing. I have drawn pathetic pictures of people in remote parts of the world listening to the cricket results or the fat stock prices broadcast from the mother country. I have even told how, when the League of Nations once carried out a little experimental broadcasting from one of its offices temporarily turned into a studio with a door which could never be closed quietly, an official there one day received a cable from Java to this effect: "For heaven's sake tell those fellows in Geneva to keep that door shut". I have explained how the voice of some girls singing in a music hall in an enemy capital might undo all the effect of a whole ministry of propaganda. I have gone further and have suggested that the microphone will be the greatest instrument towards giving us peace the world has ever known.

All these things are more or less uncertain. I made such statements before Russia, Germany, Poland and France turned the microphone into a weapon of political propaganda or Italy tried to disrupt the British Empire

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by broadcast talks from Bari. But in one respect I do know what the microphone can do. It has altered my own life more than anything else except the interchange of ultimata which started the last war. And the odd thing about it all is that I have no recollection whatsoever about how I first came to the microphone. I know that in 1927 I had been arranging for a certain number of important people to broadcast their opinions about the League and I suppose that one or other of these speakers fell out at the last moment and I had to take his place. What I do remember fairly clearly is, one, that I was suddenly summoned to Savoy Hill and asked if I would care to broadcast once a week, and, two, that after my first broadcast I was just enough of a gentleman to get outside the building before I was violently sick on the pavement.

I was nervous above all because the idea that I should broadcast on foreign affairs was quite fantastic. I was still working at the London office of the League of Nations Secretariat, which meant that I was a Civil Servant of over fifty governments none of which I dared offend lest it should protest to Geneva and I should find my salary docked or stopped altogether. Sir Eric Drummond, then Secretary-General of the League, and now Earl of Perth, consented to my trying the experiment, but warned me quite frankly that I could expect no help from him if I got myself into trouble.

In so far as the broadcast talks *were* successful it was because I was not given the freedom I should have liked. I had, to a great extent, to suppress my own opinions and I did so, not because I had the wisdom to develop a fine impartiality, but because I knew that my

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broadcasting job depended upon it. In consequence, I made the greatest possible effort to be inoffensive, neutral and detached, and in so far as I succeeded, the talks were valuable. People came to the conclusion that I was likely to give them a less biased account of foreign events than they would find in their own newspapers, and not knowing that I only did so in order not to be turned away from the B.B.C. or the League of Nations they attributed to me fine qualities that I do not, alas, possess.

Thus, because of an accident of voice and manner I found myself becoming quite a well-known figure. I should lie if I pretended that I did not enjoy my notoriety. I would infinitely have preferred to become known through some book I wrote. But any fame is better than none. It takes a very long time before one ceases to experience at least a faint feeling of pleasure when the mention of one's name brings some such reply as: "Oh, you are the fellow who talks on the wireless". Perhaps that pleasure never entirely disappears. Also, I have found rather to my astonishment that I am more often pleased when recognition is accompanied by some hostility than by fulsome and exaggerated flattery. (I so seldom express generous enthusiasm about anybody that it embarrasses me when anybody does so about me.)

There was, for example, one evening when I was to broadcast from Plymouth. I had come over in the late afternoon from the Cornish coast, and was dining quietly in a hotel. For some reason the place was very full and a typical elderly colonel joined me at my table. We got into conversation over the Burgundy and I made unparalleled efforts to suggest that I knew some-

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thing about shooting, hunting and fishing. He stood me a brandy, and I stood him a brandy.

We got on so well that I very nearly ventured to tell him the story of my largest trout. As a boy, after my Father had tried to teach me how to throw a fly on the Lyn, I went to stay at a country vicarage near Taunton. I boasted about my skill as a fisherman and was told to bring a rod as there were some huge fish in a small local stream. I was sure I could catch some although experienced fishermen had failed to do so.

The stream was a trickle with some deep pools at the bottom of which sulked a few ancient cannibal trout. They paid not the slightest attention to the various flies I plopped heavily on the surface of the water. My reputation in the village had sunk almost to zero.

On my last morning I arose very early to make one last attempt. I always took a gun, in the hope that I could bring home a rabbit if I could not get a pigeon and a pigeon if I could not get a fish. I laid the gun down by the bank of the stream, took up my rod and dropped a fly just over the nose of a great trout basking an inch or two below the surface. Lazily he took other flies but mine he neglected and I became more and more angry. Anger explains many crimes. I quietly laid down my rod and picked up the gun. The next time the trout rose to a fly I aimed and fired. He turned over on his back and I went home with a grand fish but no explanation of the way in which I had caught him.

I believe my old colonel would have accepted this confession tolerantly. After all, I had been very young and a trout is not a fox! But before I could

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put him to the test I remembered that I had to broadcast in twenty minutes' time. I interrupted some lengthy anecdote in order to say that I must leave for an appointment. My colonel looked astonished and indignant. Surely I could have no appointment at that time of night in Plymouth. Finally I had to explain that I was expected in front of the microphone. A look of comprehension and horror spread over my colonel's face as he reckoned up what day of the week it was. Finally he blurted out: "Good God, you're not that fellow, Vernon Bartlett, are you?" And when I admitted that I was, he was so angry that he refused to allow me to pay for the brandy that I had ordered for him. I have a far more genuine liking for that bigoted and angry old man than for all the nice elderly ladies who gush.

But what a lot of bigoted and angry old men there are. Never did I receive so many insults as after one unfortunate talk in which, having read a French newspaper on the way to Broadcasting House, I pronounced the name of the capital of Afghanistan as a Frenchman would—"Kaboul"—instead of "Kabul", thus accenting the second syllable instead of the first. From the letters I received, I might have committed some crime too frightful to be mentioned. I was only able to get my own back on some of my critics when I received a note from an old major-general, who had been wounded on the famous march with Lord Roberts from Kabul to Kandahar. He assured me, I believe wrongly, that the wretched city was pronounced "Karbul" by its inhabitants, so that I was able to write to all my attackers and to say that although I had been wrong to talk of

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Kaboul, they too had been wrong to talk of Kawbul.

Then there were the generals in China. It is a lasting mystery to me why people should become so furious if some word or name is pronounced differently from the way they expect. So many gentlemen who had spent years up against the long bar at the Shanghai Club became indignant over my pronunciation of the names of Chinese war-lords that in the end I tackled none of them without first consulting a Chinese expert. The general whose name was most familiar to me during the Civil War unfortunately went into a Buddhist monastery as soon as I had completely mastered it. As far as I remember it was over one of these Chinese questions that I became involved in so heated a correspondence with one letter-writer that I wrote to him that if he would be under the clock at Charing Cross station at such-and-such a time on the following Tuesday I would knock him down. I went there in fear and trembling and stood not quite under the clock but near enough to identify anybody who might be there. Fortunately for me nobody was there. Possibly my enemy, too, was wandering around in the neighbourhood to see what I was like before he made himself known. In any case, I have never heard from him since, and I hope that he does not read this book and start our quarrel all over again.

In one way or another, broadcasting was much the most difficult work I have ever undertaken, and no people did I hate so much as those who said: "What a marvellous job—a nice fat cheque and only a quarter of an hour's work a week." They did not realise that,

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on an average, that quarter of an hour in front of the microphone involved more than twenty hours' reading and preparation. They did not realise the efforts that had to be made to check up the accuracy of one's statements. They did not realise the hectic search for anecdotes or light material of some sort with which the pill could be sugared. They did not realise the search involved for fresh raw material.

The night after my weekly talk was seldom a good one. I would go through, sentence by sentence, all that I had said and wonder whether this phrase or that judgment would bring down upon me some protest in the House of Commons or in Geneva. I had good friends in Broadcasting House but I never managed to develop a conviction that my employers were wholeheartedly behind me. In a newspaper I may make a statement which will give my editor great trouble, but I know that, as long as I do it in good faith, and not too often, he will back me up. I had no such confidence about the men who ran the B.B.C. and if I was unjust to them the fault was rather theirs than mine. I had to shoulder a far heavier burden of responsibility than I ever want to shoulder again. During six years I was almost the only broadcaster on foreign affairs, and the interest in the subject was so great that inevitably I had a very large audience. But during the year that I worked in Broadcasting House I had an absurd struggle to get an office with fewer than two other people in it or a secretary who was not some unfortunate girl sent up from the typists' pool to take down a few letters on foreign affairs between a memorandum on reception in the northern region and a set of rules for

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people who wanted to broadcast S O S messages.

For a few days I had a room to myself inside the Tower—that central column of Broadcasting House which contains all the studios and which is surrounded by an outer layer of offices. It had, of course, no window, but the conditioned air was, they assured me, far purer than God's own fresh air as Londoners breathe it, because it was washed before it was allowed to enter the building. I should be free, in my little room, from all disturbances.

At first I rather enjoyed my isolation. The outer rim of offices was always busy, but few people passed through the swing doors into my part of the tower except when the studios were used at night. The only sound came from a loud-speaker just across the passage which blared forth the morning religious service and was silent for the rest of the day. The only furniture of my room was a table, a chair, a telephone and a tall steel filing-cabinet. I managed to borrow a picture and told myself that the place was comfortable.

But by the second day the silence and the deadness of the air began to get on my nerves. I became increasingly reluctant to pass through the double swing-doors that led from the impure atmosphere and the hectic bustle of the outer world. I grew to hate my telephone, my tall steel cabinet, my table and my chair.

After about a week of it I had a nightmare. I was, I dreamt, in my little room listening vaguely to the church service from the loud-speaker across the passage. Suddenly the organ stopped and an announcer read out a S O S message. "Will Mr Vernon Bartlett", it ran, "please realise that he is locked up in his room in the

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Tower, that nobody knows he is there or will hear his shouts, and that his coffin is waiting for him in the corner of the room. His death should be reported to Scotland Yard or to any police station."

I dashed to the door, and it was locked. I realised for the first time that the steel filing cabinet was, in fact, a coffin. I took up the telephone, and there was only that dead and utter silence which indicates that it was disconnected. I kicked the door and yelled, but the noises I made were muffled and futile. When I awoke I was trembling with terror and I refused to work another day in the Tower. There is one studio (3. C., I believe), where the walls are so padded that there is no trace of an echo, and the broadcaster's voice sounds so lifeless that it is hardly ever used. To me it is so terrifying that I do not believe I could speak above a whisper in it.

I was not exceptionally treated in the matter of an office and a secretary. Indeed, I was far luckier than most members of the staff and I escaped the tyranny of too-rigid office hours. But to a degree which will certainly not recur I was influencing public opinion and public policy and I found it a damnably lonely job. There were plenty of people to warn me of the dangers but very few to show that they were my allies in facing them.

My own belief is that no one person should be given a position of such authority and responsibility. And it should be made clear at the beginning of every talk on foreign affairs that the B.B.C., as such, is not involved by the speaker's statements. No foreign government is easily going to understand how a state concern like the B.B.C. nevertheless retains a very great degree of autonomy. It will never believe that the Foreign

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Office is not expressing its views through the lips of the speaker on foreign affairs. While I was broadcasting regularly I never once—stupidly, as I have since realised—visited the News Department of the Foreign Office. And yet how lamentable it would be to allow this tremendous opportunity of educating public opinion to be lost and wasted. It is wasted if talks on international affairs have to be so colourless that they vary only in length from the dullest news bulletin.

There should, I think, be not one broadcaster on foreign affairs but a panel of them. They should be of widely different political views but they should be brought together as much as possible so that they develop a team spirit, which enables them to a great extent to subordinate their political opinions to their job. The B.B.C. should make it as clear as possible that these men had been chosen because they were experts who, it was believed, would do their very best to give a detached and impartial view. It should state that it can no more be responsible for particular phrases in a particular talk than is an ordinary editor for any ordinary signed article for that newspaper. You cannot, or you should not, employ an expert and then interfere with what he says while he is doing his own job. In some ways I was given a freedom to express my views which would be given me by no London newspaper. And at the same time I never escaped from the feeling that I should be dropped like a hot brick if I got the B.B.C. into any trouble.

* * *

My job became still more difficult when I had to

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broadcast from abroad. I was less likely to be reproached than is a special correspondent of a newspaper if my story did not get through, for the arrangements for its transmission had to be made at the London end. In a general way, as long as I turned up at the studio at the right time with my manuscript in my hand I had done all that I was expected to do and only once did I fail to turn up at the studio. I was dining in Geneva with Sir Arthur Willert of the Foreign Office and W. N. Ewer of the *Daily Herald* and one or two other people. I had explained that I must leave early in order to broadcast. What would happen, someone asked, if I failed to turn up at the studio? I was horrified and explained that that was the one sort of appointment one must never fail to keep. Somebody else laughingly declared that they would not allow me to leave the room in order to broadcast on this particular evening. Everyone was doing his level best to make me feel nervous when the waiter came and asked if Mr Bartlett was there, as he was wanted on the telephone. An agitated voice at the other end informed me that I should have begun broadcasting five minutes ago. I dashed hatless downstairs, had an agonising hunt for a taxi and ultimately arrived at the broadcasting studio a minute or two after my talk should have finished in London.

The blame on this occasion was not mine for I had been talking for some months at ten o'clock in the evening and had not been notified that I had been put back to 9.20, but what happened at the London end was illuminating. After the announcement that they would now switch over to Geneva for Mr Vernon Bartlett to

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give his talk there was an unpleasant silence. Then the announcer explained that I had not yet arrived at the studio so they would have a gramophone record. At the end of the gramophone record he had to announce that I was still not in the studio. Ultimately he had to say that I could not be found anywhere in Geneva, whereupon my mother and various kindly people I did not know sent telegrams to ask whether I had had a motor accident, while most of my alleged friends took it for granted that I was too drunk to come to the microphone.

There were of course many other occasions when I was announced to talk but could not get through, or when some technical difficulty about transmission made the talk more or less unintelligible, but in each case the breakdown was no affair of mine. An unpleasant occasion was the opening of the World Economic Conference in London in 1933, when my job was to fill in time, which must be nearly as unpleasant as doing it.

I was placed in a little box on the platform just behind the table from which King George the Fifth was to make his opening address. As he did not like the sight of mysterious people shut up in telephone boxes I was hidden behind a curtain which I was allowed to pull aside for an inch or two so that I could see the events and the people I was supposed to describe. It was expected that the King would probably be a minute or two late and I had to be prepared to talk for at least ten minutes before his arrival. A watcher standing just outside my telephone box was to give me a signal as soon as the royal carriage turned up at the entrance.

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I could then draw my talk to a dignified close and end with one pre-arranged sentence which was to be delivered just as the King arrived on the platform, and which was to give the signal to all gramophone companies and others who wanted to record the King's speech. That was the theory.

In practice things went differently. The King arrived with horrible punctuality and at an unexpected entrance which my observer had not observed. I had therefore hardly begun my general talk about the conference when there was a sudden bustle outside and through my gap in the curtains I saw the King stride to his chair. Every gramophone company in the world must have damned me because I could not give my proper cue.

Nor were my distresses over. I was supposed to go on with my commentary while the King's speech was being translated in French and Mr Ramsay MacDonald was taking him down to his car. Here again came in that horrible element of uncertainty. I had timed myself as I walked majestically downstairs and had added on the few moments that would be needed for an elderly gentleman to climb into a large motor car. But I could not tell how much conversation would be exchanged between the King and the Prime Minister at the front door.

I need not have worried, however. I was in any case inaudible. Lest I should suffocate in my little box somebody had removed a small window. Lest any delegate should fail to hear the French translation somebody had installed loud speakers of terrific power. I hesitated to shout as loud as the interpreter because

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I did not want to disturb the distinguished ministers sitting on the platform just in front of me. So that listeners all over the world heard a loud translation of the King's speech in French and a mumbled sentence or two by me in English.

Even now my troubles were not over. A note was handed in to me in my cage requesting that, the moment the Prime Minister had begun his own speech and the B.B.C. had finished with me, I should talk for five minutes to the United States. But as Mr Ramsay MacDonald, helped by the loud speakers, would inevitably drown anything I said if I stayed where I was I was requested to race up two flights of stairs and to broadcast from another studio. The microphone would be "alive" all the time and it was emphasised to me how much a thirty seconds' silence would distress the National Broadcasting Company of America.

As the Prime Minister uttered his first words hundreds of delegates in the hall were astonished to see a perspiring figure, in a morning coat considerably too tight for him, dart out of a hitherto unnoticed cabin behind the speaker's chair, stumble down the stairs, and run like a hare to the exit. I am not at my best after running up two flights of stone stairs and for quite thirty of those precious seconds all that listeners across the American continent could have heard about the World Economic Conference was the panting and gasping of a puffed commentator.

Another sad time was when I had to give a running commentary of Mr Ramsay MacDonald's speech at the League of Nations Assembly in 1924. As the first Labour Prime Minister of Great Britain his words

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were awaited with great curiosity, and the B.B.C. determined to broadcast them from Geneva. But nobody knew with any degree of certainty when he would begin, and I as usual had the task of gossiping until the great man uttered his first words.

It was in the early days of international transmission of broadcast talks and there had been some discussion as to whether the telephone line by which my talk was to be relayed had better pass through Paris or Berlin. That, however, was not *my* business, and I had other things to do than to worry unduly about it. The meeting took place on one of the hottest afternoons I remember, and in the old Salle de la Réformation, which was quite the worst ventilated building put up in any modern city. For half an hour I was shut up inside a telephone box in this building. The door could not be opened lest extraneous noises should interfere with my broadcast, and I in turn should interfere with people outside. When I came out of my telephone box at the end of the half-hour I had perspired as much as any miner at the coal face. The air outside, in the hall, was to me as fresh as mountain air would be after half an hour in an over-heated Swiss hotel, and I shall never forget my astonishment when I saw people being led out in a fainting condition.

I went round the corner to the nearest café and stood myself a large glass of beer. I drank it slowly and happily. I had suffered, it was true, a great deal, but I was delighted with myself for the amount of information I had crammed into my period of broadcasting. I had begun at exactly the right moment, and I had finished all I wanted to say just as Mr Ramsay

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MacDonald stood up to make his speech. Nothing could have been better.

I waited confidently for telegrams of congratulation. Nothing came. For a couple of days I swaggered about with that comfortable feeling that I had done my job well and then I learned that, owing to some error in transmission, London had been waiting for me on one telephone line and I had been talking to London on another. Nobody in the world had heard my excellent running commentary except myself and a Swiss engineer in the Geneva broadcasting office who did not understand English.

Nor were things much easier at the funeral of King Alexander of Yugoslavia. Every European editor seemed to have jumped to the conclusion that there would be an immediate political consequence of the King's assassination in Marseilles, and as a result, Belgrade was crowded not only with kings, queens, prime ministers and generals, but also with special correspondents. As the evening went on the lounge of the best hotel, the Srpske Kral, became more and more crowded with people staring anxiously in the direction of the three telephone boxes. The bribes that were handed over to the telephone operator to expedite one's telephone calls were a disgrace and, in most cases, a waste of money. My situation was particularly complicated, since I had not only to send through my story to my newspaper but also to broadcast.

The funeral was picturesque enough to interest people who had never heard of Yugoslavia, for no country in Europe can produce such a variety of peasant costumes and uniforms. I worked like a

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madman to get my account of it through to my paper and managed somehow to turn up at the studio at the appointed time. There was an engineer who talked no English, French, German or Italian, and I talked no Yugoslav. Nevertheless, arrangements appeared to be all right. The engineer in the control room signalled to me through a little window to begin my talk. As soon as I had begun it somebody else came into the control room, had an obviously violent controversy with the engineer and embarrassed me very considerably. How could I describe the King's funeral—and it had been the most impressive ceremony I had ever known—while in the next room two people were coming to blows. I stumbled through my talk and only when it was all over did I discover that the altercation at its very beginning had thrown all the control room machinery out of gear. Once again I had broadcast and nobody had heard me.

* * *

The greatest difficulties about talking from foreign studios were naturally political ones. In almost every case the local authority wanted to censor my talk, and in every case I had to refuse to submit a manuscript in advance. No one in London or abroad seemed able to realise that the maximum of nice things I could say about any country and still retain my British audience was very much smaller than the minimum of nice things that the country expected. To some of these smaller states the idea of a broadcast about them to England was a matter of great importance and they were on to me the whole time to crowd so much propa-

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ganda into my short fifteen minutes that almost every English listener would have switched off and I should certainly, and rightly, have been dismissed from the B.B.C. I have never yet given, and never will give, a broadcast talk on foreign affairs which, in my belief, does nothing to improve relations between my own country and other countries. But it was not my job to be indiscriminately flattering and enthusiastic.

Few broadcasting authorities could realise that I was not talking for consumption inside their own frontiers. I was only asking them to give me facilities similar to those given by the ordinary telegraph administration when it transmitted the messages of foreign correspondents to their respective countries. My instructions in London were quite formal. If any administration insisted upon seeing my manuscript before I broadcast I was to refuse to broadcast. Once or twice I had to use that threat and it worked immediately, for the announcement to the British public that the B.B.C.'s commentator had not been allowed to express his views about a country would obviously do that country far more harm than if he did express views which were not, in every case, favourable.

The greatest difficulty of all arose in Italy. I had obtained Signor Mussolini's own assurance that my manuscript would not be censored, but when I arrived at the studio at Milan some hours before I was to talk to England there was great distress about my refusal to submit the manuscript. The official in charge even went so far as to telephone to Rome about it and when he realised that I was to talk without control he thought of a splendid idea. Would I mind, he asked, if a few

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of his young Fascist friends who spoke English came down to hear my broadcast, in which they were greatly interested. I could not say "No", but there was a certain emphasis about this interest which led me to insist that I must be alone in the studio. Of course I should be alone, he agreed, but when I came to talk I found that there was a large window let into one wall of the studio, and behind this window was a row of young Fascists. When I remarked how delightful it was to be back in Italy they all leant back in their chairs and smiled. When I ventured upon a criticism of their regime they leant forward and scowled. The talk from an Englishman's point of view was not particularly critical. But to ears entirely unaccustomed to any sort of criticism of Fascism it was very nearly blasphemy. As I read I tried to skim through the next few lines to make sure that there was nothing in them which a Fascist would consider outrageous. I do not believe I modified anything but I was quite glad—quite unnecessarily glad—that my train for the frontier left the same evening.

I had few regrets when the end came. That very brilliant broadcaster, Harold Nicolson, had irrevocably left the microphone because he felt that by constant compromising he was losing his own individuality. This worried me less than it did him, for I am by nature far too ready to compromise. But I was growing tired of this constant effort to express mildly revolutionary ideas in words which would win the approval of reactionary listeners.

* * *

One Saturday morning in October, 1933, I finished a

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chapter in a book I was writing about Nazi Germany. The chapter gave very convincingly the reasons why Germany would be compelled in the future to show a much greater respect for the League of Nations. Just as I put down my pen the telephone rang. It was to announce that Germany, on Hitler's instructions, was showing so little respect for the League that she had left it. Sir John Reith wanted me to prepare the news bulletin for that evening's broadcast programme dealing with this very important event. I explained how my belief that the timid policy of our own government was greatly responsible for Germany's action would make it impossible for me to speak about it with the necessary detachment. The Director-General said that he would nevertheless like me to broadcast a short talk under my own name at the end of the news bulletin. I knew that, as the saying goes, my number was up.

My preparation of that broadcast was one of the most exhilarating things I have ever known. I did not begin to write it until the evening, since I wanted first to hear the broadcast of Herr Hitler's own speech in which he announced the withdrawal of his delegates from the Disarmament Conference and from the League itself. As I listened to it I thought of all the most moderate Germans I knew and how entirely they would support every argument that Hitler put forward. There had been so much procrastination and delay on the part of other powers in approaching the subject of their own disarmament. The Führer had, during the spring of that year, made so many offers to accept the reduction of armaments to the last machine gun

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if other countries would do the same. The fact that those offers might not be sincere was no excuse at all for not accepting them. The important thing was to get his signature along a dotted line at the foot of a document voluntarily negotiated and accepted by Germany. If his acceptance were genuine world peace was assured; if it were insincere, then at any rate the whole world would turn against Germany, for a breach of an agreement which had led countries to reduce their own armaments would be so definite a threat to their security. But the acceptance of Germany's offers needed a little courage on the part of the other powers, and they had none. They preferred to find every excuse for hedging.

I hate Hitlerism today very much more than I did in October, 1933, when I still hoped that all those young men who were enthusiastic members of the Nazi movement would be able to control it and to abolish from it those abominable intolerances and stupidities which have alienated so much opinion. But I am still as convinced today, as I was on that October afternoon, that Herr Hitler made his people act in very much the same way as the British, or any other spirited people, would have done in similar circumstances.

The trouble was that in my broadcast talk I said so. There was no time to get the talk typed. I scribbled it out by hand immediately after I had listened to Hitler's talk. Then with Lionel Fielden, that charming and courageous individual who now directs broadcasting in India and who was on duty on that evening, I went across to the Langham Hotel for a hurried dinner. Between mouthfuls I read the talk over to him, and

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suggested that here or there I ought perhaps to make alterations. Not a bit of it. The talk was a clear expression of opinion and should be given as such.

Unfortunately, it was preceded in the news bulletin by a blattnerphone record of Sir John Simon's own speech of that morning in Geneva. The contrast between the two was too great. It was quite obvious that there was going to be the devil of a row. I, on behalf of the B.B.C., had taken a line which was a very strong, if indirect, criticism of the attitude of my own Foreign Secretary.

And here came in the element of comedy. With every other broadcast I have been most scrupulously careful to have at least five copies made, so that everybody who might be interested could have one. In this particular case, having written the thing out by hand, there was only one copy in existence.

I came downstairs from the broadcast studio tired out by the emotional excitements of the last few hours. There was quite a bewildering number of people on the telephone waiting to say how fully they agreed with what I had just said. The last telephone message of all came from the representative of a German newspaper. I did not know his name and I did not listen very attentively to what he said about his paper. But he argued that if he could possibly get hold of the talk at once and send it over that evening to Germany it might have a tremendous effect in preventing too great a German swing towards isolation. I did not then know how great an effect this talk was, in fact, to have in Germany as the first indication of the difference between British public opinion and its government, and that a

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report of it was made to Herr Hitler himself to show him his gesture had been justified by its results. I had been talking for a British audience and what I had said represented, I believed, the feelings of the great majority of that audience. But it seemed to me it might be useful if the talk could influence German public opinion as well, and I agreed that if the journalist came round straight away to Broadcasting House I would let him have the principal points from it.

He was there with a secretary in five minutes, but by that time I was strangely tired and quite suddenly too bored with the whole business to go through the manuscript with him in order to pick out the principal points. I never wanted to see the wretched document again. Provided the B.B.C. had it by first post on Monday morning I did not see why the German correspondent should not take it with him. He hurried away, having promised to post the talk so that it reached Broadcasting House by the first post on Monday.

I went home to bed and was kept busy on the telephone until nearly 1 o'clock. I confess that it was only when the Sunday papers began ringing up to know what I had said that I fully realised how much trouble there was going to be. And I could not for the life of me remember anything that I had put into the talk. Worse still, I could not even remember the name of the German journalist to whom I had given the only copy or that of the paper he represented. On the one occasion above all others when I needed a manuscript to prove that I had not said any of the wilder things some newspapers imagined I had no manuscript there. The next

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morning the telephone rang continually. I decided to escape from it. I went for a long walk in the country during which I made up my mind that I would resign, unless the immense majority of letters that the B.B.C. received were favourable.

I have forgotten how many thousands there were, but well over 90 per cent of them supported the talk. But it was clear that my broadcasting days were over. Having once expressed so strong an opinion, everything else that I said in subsequent talks was subjected to the closest examination, not so much by B.B.C. officials themselves as by officious members of parliament, to test my neutrality. It was agreed at Broadcasting House that it would be easier for me to continue my talks if I were no longer a member of the regular staff. I therefore took a job on a newspaper, after fully consulting the B.B.C. about it, and, having done so, was almost at once told that, since I *was* on a newspaper, I could obviously not continue to broadcast. The ability to see both sides of a question, which my work for the B.B.C. had done so much to develop, came to my assistance. I did not approve of the method of my dismissal but of the dismissal itself I fully approved. And I was a free man again.

* * *

I have another reason for being thankful that the dismissal came when it did. Had I received anything like the same praise for my books as I received for a slickness in dealing with serious matter in a fairly light way, a voice which was adequate and an ability to compromise, I should have become the most abominably

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swollen-headed person in this country. Fortunately for me, broadcasting had never been my real ambition or my real interest, and the fan mail I received was therefore not quite so bad for me as it would otherwise have been. Had the flattery been prolonged, however, I should entirely have lost my sense of proportion. I was delighted, however annoyed or modest I seemed to be, if people came up to me in the street or nudged each other when I came into some hotel lounge. This did not, of course, happen every day or even every week, but it did happen sufficiently frequently to make me think that I was somebody really important.

That sort of thing does no good to anybody, and I have considerable reason to be grateful to Herr Hitler that he provided the occasion for bringing it to an end. It is quite a strange feeling, but not invariably an unpleasant one, to be much better known at forty than one is at forty-three, but when I look back over those six years of regular broadcasting I have one considerable cause for satisfaction. Occasionally I felt that I had been misjudged, unfairly criticised for something I had broadcast, shabbily treated in the manner of my dismissal—only occasionally, for I was given a freedom of speech by the B.B.C. which was really astonishing. But when I am passing through one of those resentful moods I can remind myself that in my own opinion I never broadcast one talk which was not designed to do its little best to build up a better system of international relationships than war. The most valuable lesson of the B.B.C. phase was that self-respect is so much more important than the respect of others.

The only trouble is that as soon as my self-respect

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has served its purpose of assuaging my wounded vanity I forget all about it again. Did I, I ask myself anxiously, make the right sort of impression at some dinner party? Ought I to have worn a different shirt at some lunch? I hope for the sake of other people that they don't so often lie awake as I do and curse themselves for so nearly monopolising the conversation, for not conversing enough, or for saying the wrong thing.

I once dined alone with a rather pompous old peer whom I was later in the evening to bring before the microphone. There was nobody else there but his wife. I knew it was going to be a dull affair but there was a dead silence as soon as we sat down at table. I butted in with a long anecdote and at the end of it discovered the silence had been preparatory to the saying of grace. First round against me. My host and hostess drank water but a small decanter of claret stood in front of me. I was annoyed that old Lord Blank did not pretend to join me, and I quite deliberately helped myself. Every time I lifted my glass I intercepted an exchange of disapproving looks between the others. Clearly I was losing on points.

Then I took my knock-out. An uneasy silence descended upon us and I was sufficiently well brought up to realise that you do not say another grace in the middle of the meal. Desperately I sought for something to say and then I remembered joyfully that someone I knew had once mentioned to me that Lady Blank was her sister. "Isn't Mrs Blanker your sister?" I asked.

Lady Blank drew herself up to a great height. "That

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was the *first* Lady Blank'', she said icily.

After that my one ambition was to get out of the house as soon as I could. Long before the time came for Lord Blank to face the microphone I said we had better leave, and as I did not then know the B.B.C. arrangements I got him to the entrance of the old building on Savoy Hill three-quarters of an hour too soon. For half an hour that poor old gentleman had to stand on the Thames Embankment while I talked to him about the river of life flowing by. When at last the moment came for us to cross the road I forgot that his eyesight was not good and the Embankment was ill-lit. He fell off the edge of the pavement into a rather muddy gutter, and arrived in the studio very dirty and pardonably angry.

I have never dined again with Lord and Lady Blank.

PART TWO

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Luck, which had brought me to the B.B.C., stood by me in the manner of my departure. Since I was dismissed before too large a proportion of listeners had grown bored with my talks, I left with an unexpected amount of public goodwill. And, such is the value of notoriety, my talk on Germany's departure from the League brought me offers of three different newspaper jobs on far more favourable conditions than I could have hoped to obtain when the value of my talks was judged merely on their merit. I had, for once, shown some courage in speaking out and I was, very unexpectedly, rewarded financially for doing so.

It was time to stop and take a look at myself. What were now my ambitions? What was I going to aim at now? What were my beliefs?

As a broadcaster I had been a professional optimist. My job had been to take as cheerful a view of affairs as my conscience would allow, because, if I depressed my audiences, I should be dismissed. I might try to stimulate them by suggesting how the world could be made better, but I must on no account depress them by suggesting that anything about its organisation was fundamentally bad. I was, in fact, becoming a sleek and contented conservative who might arouse supporters of the existing order by gentle criticism but

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would never anger them by open attack.

My boyhood had been spent in Bournemouth, where I mixed almost entirely with people who held two somewhat conflicting views—one, that the country was going to the dogs, and two, that nothing about England ever could or should change. It was so easy and comfortable a form of escapology to “go Right”. I was invited sufficiently often to grand houses for week-ends to realise the reason for the vitality of the British ruling classes—its readiness to admit on certain conditions a steady stream of fresh blood. I did not “belong”, for my public school had been a small one; my university had been a casual course or two of lectures at the Sorbonne in between visits to race meetings (for I had discovered that you could go by tram ride to the races every day of the week); my family was respectably middle-class (eldest son a parson or a doctor and the younger sons anything they could make of themselves); and I had been far too poor to develop that sense of the right clothes which in turn develops that right sense of self-confidence. But I could have got myself adopted and accepted and have become a humble member of the ruling clique.

And yet I was coming to realise that man's struggle to drag himself above the level of war was one which would inevitably arouse tremendous opposition. The vested interests were so many and so powerful that anybody who merely compromised and advised was an enemy of progressive society. This war between dictatorship and democracy, nationalism and internationalism, collectivism and isolation was far too desperate to be influenced by nice exhortations to people to

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behave decently. People involved in life-or-death struggles cannot be expected to worry about decent behaviour.

So I had, in the first instance, to make up my mind whether I believed in anything with sufficient fervour to go down into the arena and fight for it. For a time I played with the idea of Social Credit, but I gave it up after I had twice listened to Major Douglas give an admirable analysis of what was wrong with the world and dry up when his audience was expecting him to explain how to put it right. And for a time the existence of poverty in the midst of plenty turned me towards dictatorships.

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The developments of science have speeded up the need for rapid legislation as much as they have speeded up the movement of traffic on the roads. Thanks to private initiative and the competitive system, bigger and better machines have been invented to produce more and cheaper goods, but each man thus put out of work has meant one person the fewer who can buy the goods the manufacturer wants to sell. "It is now not merely technically possible, by using our modern machines, to give everyone enough to eat, to wear and to shelter in", wrote Mr John Strachey in his *Menace to Fascism*, "but it is technically necessary to do so, unless the new machines are to cause unemployment, chaos and war, instead of peace and plenty."

That technical development is something so new in the history of mankind that we are still bewildered by it. It leads to two conflicting tendencies in

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international politics. On the one hand we have the argument that industry cannot flourish unless it has the whole world as its market, and on the other we have the development of economic nationalism, which means that each country wants to export as much and to import as little as possible. The first tendency has led to the League of Nations; the second to tariffs, quotas, import restrictions and economic nationalism. And until the struggle between those two tendencies has been settled, although they spring from the same cause, one sees no chance of peace.

I knew well enough where I stood in this struggle. I was on the side of the League. But within the frontiers of each state the same struggle seemed to manifest itself in an entirely different way. Democrats who resented the dictator's interference with private lives were passionately anxious to limit national sovereignty and to turn the League into a super-government. Fascists wanted regimentation inside the nation but freedom for each nation (or, at least, their own nation) to behave as it liked in international affairs. Communists wanted regimentation nationally and internationally, but along such rigid class lines that I found it impossible to follow them.

Surely there must be a middle way out. President Roosevelt had been the most interesting President of the United States since Wilson because of his efforts to abolish class warfare by persuading industries to fix a high minimum wage and a short working day. Herr Hitler, following Signor Mussolini, Kemal Ataturk and others, but acting more ruthlessly, had wiped out all political parties and had tried to wipe out all social

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divisions. The corporative state about which the Fascist countries talk so much is still so vaguely planned that one can hardly discuss it, but its fundamental idea was that people employed in any one industry should no longer be divided into competing groups of employers and workers. In Russia the same idea had been carried so much farther that the state had become the only employer of labour. Even in London the Transport Board had put an end to competition which, if left uncontrolled, might have so crowded the roads with rival buses that none of them could move.

But how much lasting success had President Roosevelt achieved? What chance was there that public opinion in democratic countries would allow that measure of interference with the individual which was necessary if the world was to make the most of its new wealth?

The American war veterans' ramp, which at one time led Congress to vote pensions to more than twelve times as many ex-soldiers as were actually disabled, was perhaps the most glaring example of the way in which vested interests can misuse the democratic system even in a highly civilised state. Only the fear that President Roosevelt, turned dictator, would make them more unpopular by imposing fresh taxes gave members of Congress the courage to stand out against a notorious scandal.

These words were written in Cornwall, where the individual liberty of which we are so proud leads to rather worse results than in other countries in the way of waste paper, eggshells and revolting little bungalows at every beauty spot. I decided that I would far rather

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live in a country which allows that sort of desecration, much though I loathe it, than I would in any one of our neat and tidy dictatorships. But the selfish type of mind to which all this litter bears witness leads one seriously to doubt whether this or any other democracy can ever develop a sufficiently united and courageous national policy on foreign affairs to enable it to survive in competition with the dictatorships.

It is not enough that people should have the right to vote once in every four years or so for a candidate who, in turn, will have to vote on such issues as the incidence of occupational diseases in industry or the merits of the gold standard. Mechanical progress has so complicated the issues that no one member of parliament, and still less, no ordinary man in the street, busy most of the time with the still more urgent problem of earning a living, can really be competent to deal with them all.

I could not, as I thought things over, accept the common conception of a world divided by two doctrines, Socialism and Fascism, which were in fundamental and everlasting opposition. I divided people into two very different groups. On the one side there were those who argued that everything would come right in the end and that the government ought not to interfere with business except when business asked it to do so by putting on a new tariff for its protection. On the other side there were the Fascists who wanted enough state interference to prevent anybody from standing in the way of their conception of national progress; there were the Socialists who demanded a much greater degree of state control, and for the benefit of a larger

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section of the population; and there were the Communists who wanted so much state interference that private property would disappear altogether.

It is certainly true that the employer is tempted to support Fascism, since Fascism destroys the Trade Unions which, in most cases, he fears and dislikes. But for him Fascism is, at best, only the lesser of two evils. Under Fascism the bad Italian landlord may find his estate supervised and the exploitation of his peasants limited in a way which would have been impossible under the old laissez-faire liberalism. Under National Socialism the very industrialists who virtually put Herr Hitler in power have none of their old freedom to dismiss incompetent employees or to reduce the size of their staffs in bad times. I believe, therefore, that even Fascism is a form of progress, for either it puts power into the hands of a far larger section of the population than the semi-feudal system it has replaced or it is a temporary setback in the march of democracy which must be followed by a much greater—if much bloodier—stride forward than would be made in a democratic country. Even Fascism puts power into the hands of so many more and such different people that, whatever the intentions of its wealthy supporters, it becomes a revolutionary movement.

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The dictator who neglects to make genuine concessions to the workers signs his own death warrant. For the modern dictator depends for his very existence on popular support to a degree which would have amazed his predecessors in the old days before the

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newspaper, broadcasting and the picture theatre gave the masses of the people more education and, above all, a greater standardisation of it. There are now, in every country, passions and prejudices which, being nation-wide, no ruler can afford to neglect. The dictator has to worry about his popularity as much as any film star in Hollywood. He dare not for long carry out a policy that is hated. He has machine guns at his command, but there are human beings behind as well as in front of them.

And so it comes about that the dictators, however apart they are from their fellow-men, depend anxiously—almost pathetically—upon the reports of their spies and agents. Metternich knew something of that job, but he would have learnt a lot from any one of his imitators today. I am assured that in the province of Rome alone there are seven thousand secret agents. Signor Mussolini's out-thrust chin, Herr Hitler's preference for simple uniform, the late Marshal Pilsudski's untidiness that amounted to shabbiness are habits or gestures which catch the people's fancy and which both conceal and betray an acute uneasiness about the people's judgment.

I once went to see the late General Goemboes in his palace overlooking the yellow Danube. Everywhere in Budapest I had seen photographs of him in a magnificent variety of uniforms and I was very curious to see how he would be dressed when I saw him. Imagine my disappointment when I met a little man in an old tweed jacket and a pair of grey flannel trousers—until somebody assured me he had put on these garments as a compliment to me because I was an Englishman. That

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a dictator, I thought to myself, on looking at his diary in the morning, should decide to dress like an Englishman because some stray British journalist is coming to see him, is an impressive example of the attention paid by these almighty rulers to popularity.

But I could not get away from the fact that the democratic ideal, for which people have struggled generation after generation and which has its martyrs far back in history, no longer inspires us, or inspires our sons, as it did our fathers. Almost every obstacle which people a century ago believed stood between them and freedom has gone. Every adult in our country now has the right to vote, and yet it becomes increasingly difficult except on panic issues to persuade him to go a few hundred yards out of the normal way to work in order to record that vote. He does not feel that the power to vote gives him the power to govern; if he did, he would be far more anxious to make use of it.

I was depressed by the evidence that democracy is above all a government by and for the old or the middle-aged. It tends so frequently to use its young men only when it has to send them out to give up their lives. In every dictatorship I visited, I was fascinated by the way in which appeal was made to that spirit of adventure and self-sacrifice which is the greatest and most inspiring characteristic of youth. It seemed to me that we were lamentably ready to believe that a democratic constitution inevitably leads to real democracy. In so many cases it gives too many opportunities to the man with no convictions and no sense of national responsibility, but with an impressive way of uttering or writing platitudes about the priority of the people in order that

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he may rob it. Dictatorships may be suitable only for backward people, but how many more of us are backward than like to admit it!

I therefore had to make up my mind whether dictatorship was always and inevitably an evil. At certain periods in the history of every country reforms become imperative but impossible of achievement unless the will of the majority is overruled. One can make out a long list of changes for the better brought about by every dictator. I came to the conclusion that in three cases, those of Portugal, Turkey and Jugoslavia, the list of such changes is longer than that of changes for the worse.

But for how long will that be so? How many of these reforms will survive the period of confusion and scrapping which follows the dictator's death? King Alexander of Jugoslavia has already fallen to the assassin's bullet and he has left a terribly difficult legacy to the Regent, Prince Paul. One can with difficulty imagine a country which has two benevolent and successful dictators in immediate succession, for a dictator must be an exceptional man and he dare not allow another exceptional man to become so powerful that he is ready at once to take over the government after the first dictator's death. The best a dictator's successor can hope to do is to lead the country back to a democratic system without loss of life.

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King Alexander was a man of unusual earnestness and sincerity whose intense love for his country could not be doubted by anybody who met him. No

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democratic compromise was possible between the Serbs, who suffered probably more than any other people in the war in their attempt to bring about national union, and the Croats, who found that national union involved their subordination to a people of the same race and the same language but of a different religion and a very much lower standard of culture. The only hope of countering dangers from outside was in the first place to abolish rivalry at home by disbanding all political parties. To do that in a country where political argument created such a buzz of noise in every café was a courageous step. That man asked to be assassinated.

He was, not surprisingly, very serious about life. But my only visit to him showed me a rather unexpectedly human understanding of his fellow-men. I had not brought the requisite morning coat with me to Belgrade, so I borrowed the coat of the British military attaché, Colonel Daly, who had a much healthier figure than I. Only if I held my breath could I escape from an unpleasant feeling of restriction across the chest and the stomach and under the armpits.

The King sent a very ancient and elevated Rolls Royce to fetch me from my hotel. A car which every policeman and most citizens of Belgrade knew by sight. As we climbed the hill towards the Serbian-style country house of Dedinje the sentries dutifully presented arms and I dared not raise my arm to acknowledge the salute lest the seams should split. By the time I was shown into the King's study I was in such sweaty discomfort that I could hardly talk to the cultured little man with the large nose who ruled the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, so I

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thought it better to explain my trouble.

He laughed so heartily that the sentry hiding behind the shrubbery peered round it in alarm. He urged me to take off Daly's coat—I merely undid the waistcoat buttons—and talked to me with the most complete frankness for nearly an hour. Signor Mussolini's ears should have burned, for we talked a great deal about him. Had he heard the King's remarks his cheeks would also have flushed in anger.

The changes wrought by King Alexander may prove to have lastingly benefited his country, because the Regent, Prince Paul, has spent enough time in Great Britain to have a respect for democracy and a hatred of dictatorship. No man less anxious to carry on in a dictatorial way could easily be found, and yet he and his country are in difficulties which prove how unpleasant it is to step into a dictator's high boots.

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In the case of Portugal it is easier to convince oneself that the people are happier under a dictatorship than under the democratic constitution that preceded it, but more difficult to believe there will be an adequate successor to Senhor Oliveira Salazar, who is in many ways the most remarkable and the least known politician in Europe. In almost every house or shop in Italy you will find a portrait of Signor Mussolini, in Germany one of Herr Hitler, in Turkey one of Kemal Ataturk, and so on; I spent two or three days in Lisbon in a futile attempt to buy a map of that very attractive city and a photograph of its dictator. Why there are no maps I never discovered; there are no photographs because

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Dr. Salazar hates publicity. He has so little personal ambition that, according to report, three or four days after he had been made Minister of Finance in 1928 he ran away, returned to his old job of university professor, and had to be brought back to his ministry almost by force.

It is a very good thing for Portugal that he was brought back, for a short time previously League of Nations financial experts who had gone to Lisbon to see if they could help the country to float an international loan had found the finances in such a mess that they laid down conditions of reform that no Portuguese government would have been able to carry through. I imagine the democratic system can never work well unless the great majority of citizens take their small share in running the country fairly seriously, and this the Portuguese never did. Although, like most Mediterranean peoples, they used to waste hours talking politics in cafés, they did little to check abuses and corruption. Whoever was in power took care to make a good thing out of it, with the result that there were twenty-two revolutions or attempts at them in as many years. The Portuguese, said a friend of mine, put easy-going and sentiment above integrity and efficiency, and there is about them a melancholy resignation which checks both democrat and dictator.

But that was before a military dictatorship made Dr. Oliveira Salazar Minister of Finance. By the end of his first year in office he had balanced his budget and he has balanced it ever since, when countries with far greater financial reputations have broken under the strain of the world slump. Since he became Prime

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Minister as well, the people, whether they like it or not (and a great many of them don't), are being reformed with the same energy as he showed in reforming the country's finances.

The most impressive square in Lisbon is generally known as Black Horse Square, although the official name stuck up on its walls is Praça do Comercio—that happens quite often in Portugal, and seems to worry nobody except me. It was built in the eighteenth century after an earthquake had conveniently destroyed a whole area of slums, and on three sides of it are magnificent government buildings while on the fourth is the River Tagus, busy with picturesque shipping. In one of these buildings is the office of Dr. Salazar—a slender man with thin lips, bright eyes, the refined features of a student, and very indifferent health. Five years ago they told me that Salazar was killing himself with overwork, but he is tough. He is very religious, goes to Mass every day; there can be no doubt that he is only where he is because he honestly feels it is his duty to be there. He goes out very seldom and meets very few of his compatriots, because, were he to do so, he would be unable to see the wood for the trees. In other words, he knows what he believes to be good for Portugal and he does not want his attention distracted by the claims or complaints of individual Portuguese. "Statesmanship", he once said to someone in this connection, "cannot be based on anecdotes."

Unlike most of the other dictators, he dislikes giving interviews. I spent days in string-pulling before I managed to see him for a few moments in his office. His first action was to object to any suggestion of

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tyranny about his government. "Censorship", he told me, "should be as light as possible, but there must be enough of it to protect the honour of the government and the prestige of the country." But, he assured me, he was against violence, since reform carried out in defiance of public opinion could not last. It led to reaction again. "The people must be led", declared Dr. Salazar, "but only at a pace with which they can keep up. To lead them we must give a lot of power to a very few men, and the success of such an experiment depends upon the choice of exceptional men."

While Salazar is young and active, Portugal is in fairly good hands, but there is, of course, that inevitable danger—he must one day hand over power to somebody else. The system he has built up may contain even greater possibilities of abuse than the inefficient democracies or military dictatorships which it seeks to replace. For it seems to leave out of account the all-important fact that a machine which dictators can work successfully is likely to break down in less capable and ruthless hands. The revised constitution which he has pushed through gives his government a degree of power which must be almost without parallel in a country with any sort of parliament. Universal suffrage is abolished and, instead, only the heads of families—that is to say, people who are expected to have a considerable sense of responsibility—have a voice in choosing members of the National Assembly. There is also a more technical body, the Chamber of Corporations, such as Signor Mussolini and Herr Hitler promise to develop, and never do develop, in their countries.

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Then again there are no political parties; they are replaced by what is called the National Union. "The old parties", Dr. Salazar once said in an interview, "existed to serve their clients. The National Union, as its name indicates, exists to serve the nation." But mankind is so accustomed to competition that one fears people may find the National Union in Portugal, Turkey and various other countries where it has been established no more exhilarating than hitting a feather cushion. I did not quite suggest this to Dr. Salazar, mainly because I never can think of the points I want to make until it is too late, but I suppose he would have replied that people needed a dictatorship until they had learnt to sink their differences for the good of the nation, and that this applied especially to Portugal, where only about half the population can read and write.

Even the way in which the plebiscite on this new constitution was held had its significant novelty, for electors who did not trouble to vote at all were counted as being in favour of the changes. Dr. Salazar was quite blunt about them. "The majority of non-voters", he said to me, "are not responsible members of the community", and I could not help wondering how much those of us who grumble about our own parliamentary system but do not even use such votes as it gives us deserve the same reproach.

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Some years ago I agreed to write a short book on what I should do if I were dictator. For one who grumbles so much about the unsocial or anti-social

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activities of lots of his contemporaries the task sounded easy and attractive. The man who sits in the bar or the club or the restaurant and lays down the law in a loud voice risks the gravest unpopularity, but I was being asked to do something very similar and, better still, being paid to do it.

But subconsciously I postponed the job. Whenever a gentle reminder from the publisher led me to take out a sheet of paper I could find nothing that I should do as dictator beyond enforcing a few fairly obvious reforms which could be put down in one chapter. In my state people were fined for leaving rubbish about and the proceeds went to develop national parks. They got it in the neck for dropping tram tickets in the streets. In big cities the small rows of houses with small strips of garden were taxed out of existence in order to make room for blocks of apartments with large public gardens and parks, but private individuals were allowed to rent strips of these public gardens to carry on their hobby of gardening.

But things of that sort could not fill even the shortest book, and as I racked my brains for new reforms I realised that a dictator's life is not a happy one. So I had to work out something else. I produced a complete change in the national electoral system to show the elector that it was a privilege to be allowed to put his cross against somebody's name on a ballot paper. He had in the first place to pass an examination to show that he was socially conscious. The examination depended in no way on a man's money and there was no serious educational bar since naturally the same schooling facilities were available for all. But the examination

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questions were based rather on common sense than on book-learning.

Having passed his examination, the elector was not called upon merely to vote once in four years about issues he did not understand. He took part in the election of the governors of the broadcasting system, the governors of the board of electoral examiners, the members of the central guild to which his technical knowledge entitled him to belong, the members of the various consumers' councils which prevented profiteering in those industries still left in private hands. He had, in fact, to work quite hard—for failure to vote carried with it a risk that he would lose his electoral privileges—but he had the knowledge that, as the result of this work, he had a say in national affairs such as no ordinary citizen in a dictator or a democratic state could ever hope to acquire. Every voter was a responsible member of the community.

And sooner or later some such examination will be necessary if democracy is to be more than a pleasant-sounding method of gulling the public.

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Dr. Salazar is, I believe, too intellectually honest to arouse national enthusiasm by pretending there is danger of attack from outside, as Signor Mussolini, for example, has done in the past, to the great advantage of the Fascist party, but to the great anxiety of Italy's neighbours. All he has done is to emphasise the Communist danger from Spain, and of that his fear is probably quite genuine. Besides, Lisbon and Oporto are the only two towns in the country with more than

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thirty thousand inhabitants, there is very little organised labour and the peasants are accustomed to a terribly low standard of life. This means that they may allow themselves to be governed with some ruthlessness, but that they will be very slow to make the effort to govern themselves. The dictatorship set up by Dr. Salazar, is perhaps the most justifiable dictatorship in Europe; at any rate, it is the least selfish. But its parliament is a farce, and its intervention in Spain since the civil war began is the best illustration of its fear of its own people. They might take all this Spanish talk of liberty too seriously and demand some for themselves.

When I was in Lisbon I tramped most of that city's seven hills in search of the parliament building, for it had been closed for six years and nobody seemed to remember where it was. Having found it, I had great difficulty in persuading anybody that I was foolish enough to want to see over it, but at last a kindly old man who, like many of his compatriots, may have had a beard or may only have been unshaven, offered to show me round. But it was a pathetic experience. There was, for example, a magnificent glass-roofed lobby which must have caused great pride when it was built. But rain was falling when I visited it, and, instead of deputies walking up and down discussing affairs of state, I saw thirty or forty spittoons dotted about the floor to catch some of the raindrops that fell through the broken glass of the roof.

That was in 1933. Perhaps the new system of election has succeeded and the lobby is now filled with deputies with a greater sense of national duty than their

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predecessors. I hope so, because Portugal is a surprisingly attractive little country. In Lisbon, lest the Englishman should feel homesick, they even have round scarlet letter boxes, for all the world like those at our own street corners. They are touchingly pleased that King Edward the First of England signed a treaty with them in the thirteenth century, thus making them Britain's oldest ally. And there are, in Oporto and Lisbon, large British colonies which have kept their British traditions intact for generations. You experience a very pleasant surprise when you step out of a glaring and noisy Oporto street into the quiet calm of a house that might well be an English country vicarage. I shall for long remember the charm and the incredible hospitality of Oporto, for most of the wine lodges are controlled by distant relations of mine, who took me out of the heat into the deep cool caverns where the port matures, put long silver pipettes down into the barrels and gave me drinks to celebrate the important fact.

At a little railway station on the outskirts of Oporto there was a blackboard near the station clock. The clock, I was told, was not altered. The station-master merely chalked up on his blackboard the number of minutes by which it was fast or slow.

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DICTATORS, unlike old soldiers, do not simply fade away. Unlike unlucky kings, they do not retire into exile. They either remain in power or die. If they remain in power they become an increasing nuisance to their neighbours; if they die, they leave awkward problems for their successors.

There was, for example, Dr. Engelbert Dollfuss, the Chancellor of Austria, whose diminutive figure made the world rock with sympathetic laughter and whose murder filled it with horror. That little man, with his great sense of fun and his broad Austrian accent, was the embodiment of the Austrian who is supposed to have countered the German's: "Our situation is serious, but not desperate" with "Our situation is desperate, but not serious". Nothing could line that innocent, childish face—not even the shelling of the Austrian workers in February 1934!

The first time I saw him was at breakfast at the Hyde Park Hotel during the disastrous World Economic Conference of 1933. While we were waiting for our coffee I smoked a cigarette. At one moment it stuck to my lip, so that not the cigarette, but only the red-hot ash at the end of it, came away. The ash fell down inside my waistcoat and began to burn so much that I hopped round the room. I was followed by the minute

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Chancellor, anxiously patting me on the chest and stomach. The odd picture we must have presented easily consoled me for the burnt hole in my shirt; I still regret the absence of somebody with a cinema camera.

When order was restored, Dr. Dollfuss began to explain to me how he was uniting the country behind him in an organisation called the Fatherland Front. I asked whether any uniform was involved, and he said, no, but every member of the organisation always wore the red and white ribbon in his button-hole. Slightly confused, Dollfuss had to admit that he had forgotten to wear his own bit of ribbon, and, to put things right again, he summoned his secretary so that I might see just what the ribbon looked like. And, as anyone who knows the Austrians would anticipate, the secretary had also forgotten his badge of loyalty.

That so pleasant and easy-going a people should have shown such ruthlessness since the war is one of the most convincing condemnations of the peace. Austria has had virtually no choice except between the Nazi devil and the Fascist deep, deep sea, and had the Quai d'Orsay allowed her to unite with Germany immediately after the war, when every political party in the Austrian Republic voted for union, there would in all probability have been no Nazi devil to worry about. Six million Austrians, with the same religion, the same contempt for Prussian militarism, the same friendly tolerance as the Bavarians, the Württembergers and the Rhinelanders, would have laughed most of the excessive doctrines of National Socialism out of existence.

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In 1935 I came down the River Salzach and the River Inn in my collapsible canoe. The left bank was German, the right Austrian. The ferry boats were lying disused and rusted on the shore, for all such humble links between one country and the other had been broken. Even on the great international trains there was far more effort made to prevent the smuggling of ideas than of goods across the frontier, and the German or Austrian frontier guards would solemnly impound even the crumpled sheets of newspaper on which I had put my feet to keep the seat clean.

Alarmists had almost led us to expect somebody to shoot at us, for all Austrian and German canoes were forbidden and we seemed to be the only foreigners on the water. At one very desolate spot we discovered a man in Germany shouting instructions through a trumpet affair to a man in Austria, but we were only once challenged on our canoe trip, and that was by an agreeable Old-Bill sort of customs officer at Braunau, the birthplace of Adolf Hitler, whose father had himself been a customs official there.

I asked him where was the house in which the baby Adolf had entered the world. He put his finger to his lips, looked around with comical care, and told me how to find the place. It had become an inn, painted the same colour as the brown shirts of the Nazis. A pathetic little woman who took my order for beer explained what a financial blunder she had made in buying the place. The previous year, she told me, there had been so many tourists that the officials had closed the place down on account of its political importance. This year nobody dared come to it, for fear of being

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suspected of National Socialist sympathies.

I came out into the sunlight cooled by beer but heated by the injustice of it. Whatever one thought of Herr Hitler, he was a famous man, and it seemed so ridiculous that such precautions should be taken to conceal his birthplace. After all, it was a damned scandal . . . and then, next door, I noticed a barracks with a tablet on the wall. In that building, it announced, Dollfuss had served his last day as an officer in the army. And Dollfuss had been revoltingly murdered by the followers of Hitler for the crime of maintaining his country's independence. I stood and stared at those two buildings and reflected upon the hatreds to which each bore witness until I was obviously arousing suspicion. How easy, I thought, for us in Great Britain to be scornful of Austria's power of resistance, superior about Dollfuss's failures, and, to put it bluntly, so bloody smug. How easy, and how unfair.

I was at a garden party in the Russian Embassy when the news of the Dollfuss murder came through to London. Ambassadors, ministers, Foreign Office officials, journalists, one or two people deliberately untidy to show that they were Communists, standing around on the lawn overlooking Kensington Gardens and thinking how interesting and encouraging it was that Conservatives, Liberals, Socialists and once-dreaded Bolsheviks were able to meet and drink tea or sweet Russian champagne together. Surely that showed how exaggerated all these anxieties about Europe were. . . .

And in a few moments we were consternated by these

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rumours from Vienna. This little man, who had been the hero of the World Economic Conference and the villain of the February attack on the Vienna Socialists, who was supposed to walk up and down underneath his bed whenever insomnia overtook him, who was mistaken for a tortoise the first time he marched along the Ringstrasse wearing his steel helmet—this little man had been shot under the armpit as he reached up to open a door in the Chancellor's office and had been allowed to bleed to death on one of those impressive damask-covered divans which recalled the luxurious days of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. No murder in Europe could have caused more alarm and indignation.

I arrived in Vienna by air half an hour before his funeral. As I was to broadcast an account to England I found myself given a very prominent position by the side of the platform on which his coffin was being guarded outside the Rathaus. All around me were members of the Dollfuss family and peasants dressed up in their Sunday best and bewildered by all the fuss made of them and their illustrious Engelbert. Several of them were no taller than he had been, and I towered above them, stumpy though I am, feeling horribly alarmed lest the last hour of bumping in the aeroplane should have retarded effects on me in front of all that multitude.

That evening I stood in a studio at the Vienna broadcasting station. I knew the place well, for I had passed hectic and alarming times in it. Only a few months before I had arrived from Budapest ten minutes before I was to broadcast a talk in German. I had sent

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my English version of the talk to be translated, and the translation had been prepared by a Viennese, who of all people most love long words and long sentences. There had been no time even to glance through the manuscript before the red light went on and I had to read out a talk filled with phrases I could not begin to understand, while sweat rolled down my forehead.

But on the evening of Dollfuss's funeral my emotions were of a different kind. Europe had probably at no time since the Armistice been so close to war. A courageous statesman had been horribly murdered. Vienna, a capital I loved more than any other, was divided by suspicions and intrigues which turned the pleasant Viennese into rival armies. And I reckoned that had I stood a few days before in front of the microphone which was carrying my voice to England, I should have had seventeen machine-gun bullets through my head.

Never have I less envied dictators than on that evening when I thought things over in a café after my broadcast. It seemed to me that this cheerful, well-meaning, hard-working little man had gone to his death with all the inevitability of a Greek tragedy. Once the parliamentary barrier between a politician and his public has been abolished violence is almost certain to result. The prime minister of the moment becomes more and more the hero of the hour—or rather, the prime minister of the hour becomes more and more the hero of the moment. He cannot conceivably produce those Utopian conditions he has promised to the people who put him in power, and they cannot conceive that he will fail them. He cannot blame the

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power of parliament, for he is supposed to be all powerful. He cannot shift the responsibility on to the shoulders of the monarch or the president, for all the publicists and propagandists have concentrated the spotlights on him. He must go from one extravagance to another, from one provocation to another, until individual assassination or that mass assassination glorified by the name of war puts an end to it all.

A day later I had the first interview with Dollfuss's successor, Dr. Kurt von Schuschnigg. A quiet, earnest, honest man. It was in a large broadcasting studio dotted with grand pianos and music stands—it would have been too tactless to face him with the bullet holes that had decorated the studio from which I had talked. The new Chancellor looked like an unusually intellectual "something in the City" or an unusually elegant Treasury official and he had about as much charm and cordiality as a fish on a marble slab. I saw him at his worst, for he was just broadcasting reassuring statements in every foreign language he knew, and he was abominably nervous. But I felt about him, as I felt about Salazar, that he was honest and without much personal ambition. That, in fact, Austria was lucky to have such a man; he might succeed in leading her back from the dictatorship of Engelbert Dollfuss towards a more representative regime. Not all totalitarian states can expect so much good fortune.

The job might so easily have been left, for example, in the hands of Prince Rüdiger von Starhemberg, so jovial, hearty and empty-headed. The last time I heard him speak was when he was Vice-Chancellor and at the head of the Heimwehr, whose troops lined up on

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both sides of the gangway in the Concert Hall and greeted him with outstretched arms and "Heil Starhembergs" in the most slavish imitation of Nazi technique. I sat in a box with a lot of magnificent, but somehow pathetic, generals and listened to the Prince make just the same appeals to mass resentments and prejudices as his fellow-Austrian, Adolf Hitler, had made so successfully in Germany—only much of the resentment Starhemberg sought to arouse was against Hitler and his followers.

And I remembered the last occasion when I had been in that Concert Hall. It had been in 1931 and I had gone to Vienna to represent the League of Nations at three conferences. For part of the day I was a Boy Scout at a Boy Scout Conference at Baden. For part of it I was a "Business or Professional Woman"—I never knew which—and had the distinction of being the only male at a banquet whose Lady Chairman assured me I should see how concise women could be and who organised speeches which kept us later than I have ever been at any other banquet. And for part of the day I represented the League at a Conference of the Second Socialist International in the Concert Hall.

On the platform where Stahremberg now preached his intolerance there had stood a gigantic white statue of Matteotti, that attractive young man whom I had met at the 1917 Club in London so few weeks before the Fascists murdered him in Rome. Otto Bauer and one or two others made speeches in which the note of bitterness drowned that of optimism. Some of the trade union delegates were, to say the least of it, uninspiring. But there was a predominating atmosphere

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of genuine co-operation, of generous ambition to see the standard of life raised for all men in all countries which made the little nationalist boastings and prejudices of Prince Starhemberg sound very poor stuff.

It was in a neighbouring concert hall that I aroused the anger of one of the greatest and most attractive victims of National-Socialist prejudice, Dr. Bruno Walter. I was in Vienna to broadcast, and the Austrian Government, unlike so many others, had confined its propaganda to a few gentle efforts to make me yet fonder of a country which I already loved. In the course of these efforts an official at the Vienna Foreign Office had managed to get me a ticket for a Bruno Walter concert on Sunday morning after every ticket in the place had been sold out.

But on Saturday evening some Austrians took me out to Grinzing to drink "Heuriger" wine. We went to none of the gardens where life is made cheerful or sentimental for foreigners by guitars and harmonicas and singers in Tyrolese costumes. Our pilgrimage was a serious one. My companions took their Austrian wines as seriously as one might take a Richebourg or a Château Lafite or a Berncastler Doktor. To me, as to so many other unwary ones, the little glasses put before me tasted scarcely stronger than lemonade. My friend John Gunther had not then told me of a mayor of Chicago who visited Grinzing with a bodyguard of tough guys accustomed to drinking their spirits neat and whose bodyguard had to be laid out like corpses by the roadside after an evening devoted to grumbles about and gulps of "Heuriger". The rooms were abominably hot and I

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did not like the sausages I was urged to eat to modify any possible effects of the wine. And on the Sunday morning I awoke with a serious longing for death and an inside as disturbed and uncertain as a volcano in full eruption.

But there on the table lay my ticket for the concert. So much trouble had been taken to obtain it for me that I must attend, although I was momentarily as little interested in music as in the habits of limpets. I went unhappily to the concert and found that my seat was in the very middle of the fifth row and that I was consequently almost as conspicuous as I could possibly be.

I sat in dumb misery through the first half-hour, hardly alive enough to be amazed by the way in which the master's finger-tips seemed able to draw beautiful sounds from dull-looking instruments. And then it became absolutely imperative that I should leave without delay. I stumbled over feet, people made noises at me to persuade me to make less noise, and Bruno Walter, with a sharp tap of his baton, stopped his orchestra and glared at me until the door closed behind me. Only once in my life have I felt more humiliated, and that occasion has no place in this book.

Three or four years later, when I was in Vienna to lecture in German that kept on breaking down to a very impressive audience which included the British Minister, Herr von Papen and a few hundred people who nearly all talked excellent English, I met Bruno Walter at a dinner party. To my horror he remembered me. To my relief he was thoroughly

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amused when he learned why I had so disturbed his concert.

And now I leave "Heuriger" wine to the people who can carry it; it is safer to stick to gin, brandy, vodka, schnapps or some other relatively harmless stuff of that kind!

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THE history of the treatment of the vanquished powers since the Armistice is so packed with blunders that one hardly likes to write about it. Mr Winston Churchill is presumably more responsible than any other British national for the existence today of the Bolshevist regime, since he more than anybody else encouraged those military attempts to drive the "Reds" out, and gave Lenin the one great rallying cry without which he might so easily have failed. In exactly the same way M. Poincaré was the spiritual father of Herr Hitler. He was not primarily responsible for the terrific blunder of expecting the Germans to be contented with a peace treaty drawn up in every detail before they were invited to Versailles, and to which they were only permitted to suggest very minor modifications. But he was primarily responsible for the French occupation of the Ruhr in the spring of 1923.

Lord Bradbury—then Sir John Bradbury—was the British representative on the Reparations Commission, and he earned immortality, or something approaching it, by his protest against this occupation. It took place, it will be remembered, on the ground that Germany had failed to deliver the promised quantity of pit-props by way of reparations, and Lord Bradbury

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declared there had never been so great a misuse of timber since the wooden horse went into Troy.

But M. Poincaré had not enough imagination to realise how important the human factor is in politics. One can argue until one is blue in the face that the Germans quite deliberately inflated their currency in order to frighten their ex-enemies and to put them into difficulties. And if it were true that they thus intentionally inflicted upon themselves far worse suffering than they knew even during the last year of the war, it would not excuse M. Poincaré for committing a blunder great enough to encourage in the German mind a hatred of the French which can hardly die down in a generation. Nobody who was not blinded by prejudice could have expected the Germans, or any other people, to make great financial sacrifices year by year in order to pay reparations to foreigners who had not even the courage or the competence to decide at the Peace Conference for how long a period the payments were to continue.

People who have suffered as the Germans suffered in their inflation, who have had their wages halved in value in less than twenty-four hours, who have seen currency dropping in exchange value from somewhere about 100 marks to the pound to 18 or 19 billions, cannot possibly be expected to behave normally afterwards. While Herr Stresemann was trying courageously to get the best terms he could for the withdrawal of the French from the Ruhr and for an international loan to put Germany on her feet again, Herr Hitler in Munich took his first opportunity of trying to overthrow the Republic by entering a Bierhalle where a meeting was in progress,

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firing his revolver at the ceiling to attract attention, and announcing that it had, in fact, been overthrown. It had not and the army remained loyal to the government, and when Hitler and his followers marched through the streets the troops fired upon them and routed them. Malicious rumour has it that Hitler, under fire, threw himself so violently on the pavement that he broke his collar-bone. But rumour is always said to be a lying jade. Goering was severely wounded and was smuggled by his wife over the mountains into Austria to begin a period of four years of exile, drifting around in Hungary, Poland, Denmark and Sweden.

In any case, M. Poincaré showed the way to the Nazis. Herr Stresemann was to wear himself out trying to obtain more generous treatment from the Allies, while Herr Hitler, realising that the treatment would never be generous, had merely to go ahead attacking everything the German Government did and putting upon it the blame for many of the blunders and intolerances of the Allied powers. People still do not realise the extent to which the growth of National Socialism in Germany has been in direct ratio to the number of empty bellies. Until the French occupation of the Ruhr and the collapse of the mark, Herr Hitler was unknown and his movement was a joke. But at the elections in May 1924 he polled almost two million votes and found himself with thirty-two seats in the Reichstag. In December of that year the Dawes Plan went through, the currency was stabilised and the first international loan to save Germany was floated. At the election held in that month the Nazi vote was halved, and between December 1924 and May 1928 it went on

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losing ground. By the election of May 1928 the number of deputies in the Reichstag was reduced to twelve.

But during those four years of relative prosperity its success was none the less being prepared. Loans were easy to obtain. The Americans, who were then so fabulously wealthy, poured their money across the Atlantic into any German concern that needed capital. It turned the heads of the German people. Every form of extravagance became popular in a way which I have seen in no other country in the world. Edgar Mowrer, who is certainly no friend of National Socialism, goes a long way towards explaining it in his book *Germany puts the Clock Back*. "Morality, virginity, monogamy, even good taste were treated as prejudice . . . the general atmosphere was not so much vicious as sexually casual. It reflected a society in which sex had entirely lost any connotation of theological or even ethical sin. . . . Abortion was regularly undertaken by any number of otherwise entirely respectable surgeons. Its low price was the proof of its universality, for disaster could lead to severe punishment."

There was of course a great deal of good than went with this evil. In no country was there such a development of the Youth Movement. Everyone who liked the open air had unparalleled opportunities of enjoying it. Youth hostels sprang up everywhere. The rivers began to be covered with those little collapsible canoes which are such a feature of Germany in summer. The young artist, the young author, the young architect, had the time of his life.

But the older people could not understand. The

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Germany which they knew had been so very strict. Many of them turned to this man, Adolf Hitler, who was a vegetarian, a teetotaler, a non-smoker and, as far as one could see, a man who led the most abstemious life possible. There was revolt even among the younger generation against the excesses of the time. For with excess marched poverty. In no country except the United States was there rationalisation on the same scale. The latest possible labour-saving machinery was installed in every factory. Small businesses were replaced by giant cartels. In their efforts to destroy the working-class movement which protested against this growing unemployment the big industrialists turned to Hitler. Here was a movement, they argued, which was supported mainly by the little lower middle-class, but which disliked the lower middle-class trade unions. With a certain amount of financial backing it might break the working-class movement. They gave it the financial backing, and it did break the movement.

American financiers did almost as much as M. Poincaré to put Herr Hitler in power. Poincaré did it through bad psychology and the financiers did it through ignorance. The United States boom and subsequent slump compelled American investors to hurry their capital back from overseas. In doing so they suddenly put an end to all that comfortable supply of money with which the German Government and German municipalities had postponed any serious reflection about sound finance. In the space of a month or two Germany fell again from apparent prosperity to terrible poverty. And as soon as she did so the Nazis once more began to win influence. The twelve

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deputies of the May 1928 election were increased to a hundred and seven at the election in September of the same year. The crisis became worse, and in July 1932 the National Socialists could claim two hundred and thirty seats in the Reichstag. Herr Hitler had become the greatest power in Germany.

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But who was this Hitler? His father was of German peasant stock established on Austrian soil but separated from Germany only by the width of the River Inn. There must always have been about Hitler's youth a certain sentimental affection for the country on the farther shore. Here Hitler, *père*, had risen to the rank of a customs official, but Herr Hitler, *fils*, had no ambition to become an official. He wanted to be an artist, and when both his parents died he set out at the age of seventeen for Vienna with, according to *Mein Kampf*, "only a suitcase with clothes and linen in my hand, but with an invincible determination in my heart. What my father had done fifty years before, I hoped in my turn to drag from the hands of providence. I too wanted to become 'someone' as long as it was not an official."

But young Adolf's water-colours, good though they were, were not good enough to gain him a scholarship at the Academy of Art. He was advised to study architecture instead, but the advice was as futile as that of Queen Marie Antoinette who advised the poor to eat cake instead of bread. He was almost penniless in a great city.

If that city had not been Vienna the present ruler of

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Germany would have been a very different man. In the first place there was in Vienna a tremendous contingent of Jews, and he made friends who lent him books—not always the most authoritative ones—about the Jewish race. It was in Vienna that he decided that “by fighting against the Jews I am doing God’s work”. And, in the second place, he discovered to his horror that his own people, the German people, were not ruling the Austro-Hungarian Empire. “The Royal House”, he writes in *Mein Kampf*, “was becoming Czech in every possible way; and it was the hand of the goddess of Eternal Justice and inexorable Retribution that caused the most deadly enemy of Germany in Austria, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, to fall by the very bullet which he had himself helped to mould. And he was the chief patron of the movement, working from above, to make Austria a Slav state.”

Young Adolf wandering about among the poor of Vienna was disgusted to discover that in this German city people he met talked Czech, Hungarian, Croatian or other strange languages which he could not understand. And it was that fact which made him an enemy of democracy. Democracy in the Austria-Hungary of before the war would have put Germans in the minority. Young Adolf went hungry. When he could, he acted as a bricklayer’s assistant. Instead of designing houses as an architect he was mixing the mortar with which to build them. And in the bitterness over his fate grew this overwhelming belief that the Jews were responsible for it all.

Poverty made him a Socialist but his passion for

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Germany made him an anti-democrat. There was therefore no room for him in the Social-Democratic parties of Central Europe. Not until after the war did the chance come to combine Socialism and Nationalism into one party. As soon as he could manage it he left Vienna and went to Munich. What he did in his years there nobody seems to know, but when the war broke out he obtained special permission to serve in the German army instead of returning to his native Austria. What he did during the war also few people seem to know. He became towards the end of it a corporal and somehow picked up the Iron Cross. When the collapse came he was in hospital recovering from a British gas attack somewhere near Ypres and, according to his own account, he had thanked God at the outbreak of war and he wept to hear of the Armistice.

He went back to his regiment in Munich and was detailed to do political work. One night they sent him to find out about something called the "German Workers' Party". He found that it had only six members. He had hoped to organise a party of his own but, after all, these six members did not constitute a very large organisation. In time he joined up with them, became Secretary and Organiser, and was launched on his political career. All his prejudices from Vienna days found expression in the programme put forward in February 1920. "None but members of the Nation may be citizens of the State", runs one article. "None but those of German blood, whatever their creed, may be members of the Nation. No Jew, therefore, may be a member of the Nation." All

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"incomes unearned by work" were to be abolished. All trusts were to be nationalised.

Everything was to be done to protect the small artisan and the small shopkeeper—people of the class with whom Adolf Hitler had mixed during his years in Vienna and Munich. And if he has not even now succeeded in closing the big department stores which put so many of these small shopkeepers out of work it is scarcely his fault. The economic arguments against putting up prices and increasing unemployment are too difficult for him to overcome. But even his promise to close them gave him the support of every little shopkeeper: although the instructions for the anti-Jewish boycott on April 1st, 1933, insisted that Woolworth's was not a Jewish firm, and must not therefore be interfered with, posters urging people to buy elsewhere appeared on its windows.

One can so easily understand how the millions of German unemployed or barely employed listened to the Nationalist-Socialist speeches. Hitler was going to defend the weak against the strong. He was going to destroy the capitalists who had replaced the worker by machinery in order to increase their own profit. He was going to put an end to the "Kultur-Bolschevismus" which had played hell with the nation's morals. He was going to clean up the administration, for there had been too many large scandals involving high officials, and on frequent occasions business men who happened to be Jews. Every prejudice felt by the little man was felt by Hitler and was reflected in his programme and his policy. There was, too, a genuine simplicity about the man which attracted thousands of people who were

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tired of the pompous display of wealth during the boom years.

* * *

And what kind of man is this Austrian ex-painter who has become not only the ruler but almost the God of the great German people?

I dislike interviewing important people. I stumble through the questions and forget half the answers. Details about the pictures on the walls and the papers on the desk, which my colleagues always notice, escape my attention. But there are certain interviews which even I do not forget, either because of the personality of the man or because of some peculiarity of the occasion. I remember every detail of my first interview with Signor Mussolini and Lord Northcliffe because of the force and determination they conveyed. I remember interviews with Mr Ramsay MacDonald because of the incredible woolliness with which he expressed his thoughts. I remember talks with Anthony Eden because I like him so much and wish so much that I could admire him more. I remember the twinkling humour in the eyes of Gustav Stresemann and Maxim Litvinoff; the insincere friendliness of Sir John Simon and Herr von Papen; the lovable pomposity of "Uncle Arthur" Henderson; the extraordinarily piercing blue eyes of Colonel T. E. Lawrence; the muddle into which that wicked old patriarch, Dr. Pasitch of Jugoslavia, got himself during the war when he tried to reconcile President Wilson's fourteen points with his own determination to kill off as many Bulgarians as possible. Of my first interview with Herr Hitler I can remember hardly anything at all

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beyond the impossibility of conversing with him in a normal way.

There was a large desk (although not so large as Signor Mussolini's). A tall vase of flowers was in one corner. There was quiet modern furniture about the place. I remember Herr Hitler's large brown eyes and the way in which his famous lock of hair kept falling over his forehead when he was excited. He was a little fuller in the face than I had expected and a little wider in the moustache. He gave me the impression of believing quite sincerely in everything he said—sincerity, at least, was the one and only impressive quality about him.

As I was wondering how it was possible that so great a country as Germany should be ruled by a man who uttered such platitudes as those with which he began our talk he suddenly started shouting. That, above all, I remember. It was almost as though, like Joan of Arc, he heard voices coming out of the air. I imagine that a man in a trance would behave in much the same way, and while he was shouting I am convinced that I could have walked out of the room and he would not have noticed my departure.

With Dr. Goebbels you can discuss. He is supposed to be as ruthless as any other German leader. An undersized dark little man with a club foot could hardly be otherwise in a movement which boasts so much about blond and beefy Aryans. Gifted—or cursed—with such intense nationalism, the physical disability which prevented him from serving in the war must have warped his mind. But he has a charm which the others lack. Not only a charm but also a great sense of

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humour and a considerable courage. During his one and only visit to Geneva he received the world's press, which included almost every newspaper that was hostile to his regime. The hotel authorities had made a sort of reading-desk for him out of packing-cases and had covered it with a hotel table-cloth. The result was that he looked very much like a small priest standing in front of a large lectern, and he made his declaration and answered his questions with the fire and fury of a great religious reformer. As for his sense of humour, if ever you have a chance ask him to tell you of the early days of the Nazi movement when he was first appointed as leader in Berlin. His story about how he thrust the policeman's bayonet under the arm of his Jewish arch-enemy in a cinema palace shows a strange sense of morality but also a considerable sense of fun.

The bullying and blustering General Goering I have only met once, and then I disliked him so cordially that I find it difficult to believe that he is among Nazi leaders one of the most reasonable and most open to discussion. But even he seems to have become more moderate with the years. The last time I saw him was on January 30th, 1937, when Herr Hitler addressed the Reichstag and persuaded—persuaded is perhaps not the word; ordered would be better—the Reichstag to give him another four years in which to perform miracles. On that occasion Herr Hitler drove through the streets looking solemn and gloomy and paying small attention to the enthusiastic salutes of the few people who had turned out, despite the bitter cold, to greet him. General Goering on the other hand bowed to either side of his car and waved his hand as affably as any film star.

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But with Herr Hitler you cannot discuss. Each time I have seen him he has gone into the same sort of trance and has shouted in the same sort of way. The man is obviously abnormal, and yet amazingly shrewd. Nobody, at any rate in recent history, has had such an amazing gift for playing on the prejudices of the crowd. It is only now after well over four years of power that the ordinary people begin to whisper criticism of him. And even so, they are, I believe, growing tired as much of his virtues as of his vices. He is, for them, too perfect. They would prefer a hearty liver like Goering to a man who eats so little, drinks so little and loves not at all.

In 1930 he told me how much he was going to reduce unemployment in Germany, and I did not believe him. In 1932 he told me to what extent Germany was to be made self-supporting, and again I could not believe him. In 1936 Dr Schacht, the General Staff and all other Germans who had travelled a great deal abroad, and who understood, or thought they understood, foreign public opinion, assured him that he could not reoccupy the demilitarised zone of the Rhineland without grave international trouble. The troops whom he sent in on March 7th were not welcomed in the demilitarised zone as saviours, for the people who watched them march across the Rhine bridge into Cologne were convinced that on the following day British and French troops would march eastward into Germany again. But Hitler, who has never been outside his own country—countries, since Austria still retains its independence on the map, if not in his own mind—save for one brief and unfortunate visit to Signor Mussolini at Venice, knew

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more than all these experts about the reaction of world opinion. His uncanny instinct commanded one's respect if not one's affection.

* * *

I have met only one other man who seems to have the same instinct for understanding the little people about him to the same degree, and he, thank heaven, has made so different a use of his talent that it sounds farcical to mention his name in a chapter devoted mainly to Adolf Hitler. But R. C. Sherriff understands by instinct in the same way as the Führer.

Twice in my life I have been temporarily freed from financial doubts and worries. Once was when the British Government handed me over a wound gratuity which at that time seemed to me fabulously large. The other time was when I collaborated with R. C. Sherriff in turning his play *Journey's End* into a novel. And I appreciated that second occasion because it gave me an unusual opportunity of getting to know a young man who was incredibly little affected by the sudden acquisition of a handsome fortune and world fame.

In the novel I made young Raleigh's father the local doctor at the village of Alum Green, a spot which Sherriff had discovered on a map of the New Forest. I had great fun describing a white, dignified, early Victorian house for him, with a semicircular drive flanked by rhododendrons leading to two green iron gates. We went to Alum Green together and found there was no house of that kind in the whole village, and Sherriff wanted me to scrap my nice description. I wrote, too, of an excursion made by Raleigh and Stan-

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hope to the source of the Highland stream, and told how they jumped from tussock to tussock of long dry grass, half believing and half pretending to believe that they would be swallowed up if they missed their footing and came down on the black mud between. We went there, Bob Sherriff and I, and not a tussock could we find, and again my nice little contribution to his book nearly went into the wastepaper basket.

But on that same trip our car passed a man wearing a vivid tie and walking in the rain along an unusually desolate road. Within a minute Sherriff had produced the only credible reasons for the presence of that man with that tie on that desolate road. This account probably did not fit the facts, but in some odd way it was truer than they could have been. We spent a weekend at an Eastbourne hotel crowded with ex-officers and ex-officials from the Far East. And Sherriff knew almost better than they knew themselves how it must feel to return to obscurity in England after having a position of importance and some forty servants in Rangoon or Shanghai or Hongkong. And this knowledge, I believe, was the outcome of no conscious reasoning; it was the same instinctive understanding of other people that Herr Hitler would possess if he also had a sense of humour. Having none, he can believe in himself enough to become dictator and to hate all those who do not share his belief.

* * *

I was in Berlin on April 1st, 1933, the day of the anti-Jewish boycott. Until that day, even after that day, I hoped that the fine young men who had gone into

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the Nazi movement would control it. But that day shook my faith. There were very few "incidents". I visited almost every district in Berlin, the poorest as well as the richest, and I saw no man beaten or molested, but I came back to my hotel disgusted and overwhelmed with shame that people could be proud of so much bullying; just as I had been thirteen years before when I awoke one morning in Frankfurt and discovered that French troops had occupied the place during the night.

I have, I believe, no understanding of the colour bar. One of the most civilised men I have ever met was a Negro dentist in Chicago. He was a great patron of Negro art, and I wish I could remember the name of a sculptor whose Chained Slave stood in his house, for the works of that artist and of the Dane, Kai Nielsen, have moved me more than any other sculpture I have ever seen. But to entertain my Negro dentist and his charming wife I had to invite them to a Chinese restaurant in the "Black and Tan" quarter of the city, and the coloured Pullman conductor on the train that took me to Detroit was as rude to me as he could be because as many Negroes as Whites were on the station platform to see me off.

But on that day in Frankfurt, when I saw some French officer's Negro servant spitting as often as he could manage it in the corridor of my hotel, when I lay on my stomach on the roadway because some nervous and bewildered coloured soldiers started to fire a machine-gun on the crowd—on that day my blood could not have boiled with more indignation had I been one of the Frankfurt Germans whom the

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French were so foolishly humiliating.

It boiled just as furiously on April 1st, 1933. No body in my experience came nearer to being beaten than I, myself. And that occurred because my temper and my liking for a pretty face overcame my cowardice. I was looking into the window of a flower shop on the Kurfürstendamm and trying to forget all about National-Socialism, when half a dozen Nazis strode into the shop and cursed a young girl in charge because she had not closed it. If she had not been so pretty I should doubtless have gone my way in peace. I protested, was seized, and should doubtless have had a very bad time of it had I not produced my passport with amazing rapidity to prove I was a foreigner. As it was, I was allowed to slink away down a lane of onlookers who certainly sympathised with me but dared not say so. And had the girl been even prettier I should not have had the courage to wait to see that she was well treated.

But in a way the boycott of April 1st was all the more depressing because it was orderly. It was so much less excusable than an exhibition of school-boy bullying would have been. And there were two thousand years of history in the eyes of the Jews who peered out through their barred shop-doors while young Nazis pasted up insults over their windows. I should not like to be in Germany if and when the Jews take their revenge.

That sort of campaign, one hoped, would die down. It has not done so, and to it has been added another campaign of hate far more dangerous. The Jews can reply only by storing up memories and teaching

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their children to do so. The Russians could, and may, reply to it at any moment. They can be, and may be, goaded into revolt. The Germans can be, and may be, so filled with fear of this Russian attack, which has been used so skilfully to enable this policy of German rearmament to be carried through, that they will go to war out of sheer panic. Only when one sees the extent to which, under a censorship and a dictatorship, a peaceful and kindly people can be worked up to the utmost limit of bestial hatred does one appreciate even the most smug and inefficient democracy. I would far rather see the words "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité" pencilled up on the dirty walls of some French government department than: "Credere, Obbedire, Combattere" neatly painted above the desk of some efficient bully in a black shirt, much though I support the qualities of belief, obedience and a readiness to fight for the things one values.

But even campaigns of hatred pall after a time. On the fourth anniversary of Hitler's appointment to the chancellorship I went into a café in Berlin shortly before his speech in the Kroll Opera House began. I had been assured that no German would dare to eat or drink while the great man was speaking. I was cold and hungry and with the utmost speed I gobbled down a little food and gulped down a little coffee while the members of the Reichstag, who were meeting for the first time since they had been elected five months previously, jumped to their feet whenever they were told to approve some new piece of legislation. I looked pityingly at people who came after me into the café out of the snow and east wind—they would have to wait for

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two and a half hours before they could even get a warm drink, for General Goering, as President of the Reichstag, had just called upon Herr Hitler to address Germany.

Not a bit of it. It is true that customers whispered their orders and that waiters went about on tip-toe as though they were in church. Never was soup consumed more silently. People put their knives and forks down with the utmost precaution against noise. There was so nearly silence in the café that once when Hitler paused for breath the only sound was that of somebody pulling the plug in the café lavatory.

But after the first hour people began to fidget. One man near me took out his newspaper and began to read it. There was a little sigh of relief as other people followed his example. Somebody wrote a letter. Somebody else did a crossword puzzle. Nobody spoke aloud, but not more than two-thirds of the people listened to their Chancellor and leader. I doubt whether Dr. Goebbels's efforts to compel every German to sit in awed silence and inactivity while Herr Hitler speaks will ever again succeed. As one foreman in a factory remarked, when he was told that his Saturday afternoon must be given up to listening to two hours of oratory: "Even in a theatre you have an interval when you can go out and get a drink".

* * *

I found myself thinking of an evening spent a year previously in the Taverne in Berlin. Norman Ebbutt of *The Times*, at his usual place at the head of the table, and half a dozen of us all on our very best behaviour

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because somebody had brought his niece, a Dresden-china girl straight from Virginia. She had never been to New York except to catch her ship, and had arrived that very afternoon in Berlin, thrilled but a little timid. She looked so damned innocent that our conversation was at first strained almost to disappearance, but she found the beer suited her and she lost her nervousness, and, in losing it, encouraged us to lose ours.

To such an extent that when she was lifted off her chair by an undoubted and very audible belch nobody—least of all the Dresden-china Virginian—was particularly embarrassed. Indeed I, rather foolishly, said I would bet her a dollar she could not do it again.

She went through the most extraordinary contortions and became so red in the face that I feared I had angered her. Then, sadly and in that inimitable Virginian drawl, she said: "You can't burp if you haven't got the gas". Which seems to me to be a profoundly true remark, and one worthy of careful reflection by anybody tempted to become a dictator. The time will come when, to change the metaphor, he will no longer be able to deliver the goods.

The more one sees of dictatorships the more one becomes convinced that the hatred and fear which is their foundation must almost inevitably lead to bloodshed. Herr Hitler is fast approaching the moment when he must choose between peace and war. The Jews, inside Germany, are now so weak that they are hardly worth hating, and the Versailles Treaty contains no further inequalities. Somehow public enthusiasm must be kept at fever-pitch or it will turn against the tremendous tyranny involved by a dictatorship with all

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its local bosses and its redundant departments. And the campaign against Communism at home or abroad is not enough in itself, for Communism is trampled out of sight at home and abroad it leads to political and even to military adventures such as German intervention in Spain. Sooner or later these adventures, if continued, must lead to war.

And so unimportant an incident might start the whole war business all over again. Someone who appeared to be truthful once told me, with all sorts of oaths to convince me that his account was true (it probably wasn't) how the United States nearly started hostilities against Austria long before the sinking of the *Lusitania* made a breach with Germany inevitable. It happened this way.

The wife of an important member of the American Embassy in Vienna received news one Saturday afternoon that her son in Switzerland was dangerously ill. Her husband was away, the Embassy staff had gone off for the week-end, and a suitable train was leaving at once. Of course the good lady took it, without waiting for any diplomatic documents to say who she was.

In the train she went to the lavatory and she took the precaution of tearing up a newspaper to sit on. She did not take the precaution of reflecting that newspapers in war time were foully printed with ink that never dried satisfactorily. At the frontier she made a fool of herself, for she objected to a careful examination of her luggage and yet could produce no satisfactory evidence to show she was as important as she claimed to be. Her very indifferent knowledge of German

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complicated matters. In the end the officials were convinced that she was a spy. She was searched and stripped. She might be the bearer of some secret message.

And there, sure enough, were rows and rows of mysterious hieroglyphics stamped across her body. You can imagine the angry bewilderment of the victim, the excitement of the frontier officials, and the subsequent interchange of diplomatic notes that was necessary before the danger of international relationships had disappeared.

The last time I was in Berlin on a great fête day I came down the Wilhelmstrasse late at night. The flood-lights still lit up the long red flags with their black swastikas on white backgrounds which hung from the government buildings. Gold, gay streamers fluttered in the cold east wind. No people has a better sense of *mise-en-scène* than the Germans and these flood-lit colours seen from the semi-darkness of the street level were strangely beautiful. Near me on the Wilhelmplatz were a few rather bedraggled individuals hunting among the rubbish that had been left by the partakers in a great torchlight procession. They were just dim figures shuffling around in the snow. But suddenly, as the clocks struck midnight, the flood-lights went out. The searchers for poor treasure amongst the rubbish at once became prominent. They seemed to me to symbolise the whole German people, carrying on its patient struggle for existence, groping in the darkness of a censored atmosphere, as devoid of responsibility and personality as are the tramps that wander along the country road. The show was over!

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SIGNOR MUSSOLINI is fond of explaining Fascism by declaring that it was a reaction against a brutal Communism. Actually it was nothing of the sort. There had been a period when engine-drivers would refuse to drive trains carrying an officer in uniform and when Italians who had fought for their country were subjected to every possible humiliation. But that period was over long before Signor Mussolini became a really important figure in Italy. It was ended partly by the workers themselves, because, after occupying the factories of Milan and thus gaining control of the industrial nation, their nerve failed them and they quietly handed the factories back to their owners. A still greater part was played by that foxy old Liberal, Giolitti. There was no Communist danger in Italy by the time I arrived there in December, 1920, and Mussolini was still the relatively inconspicuous editor of a newspaper in Milan.

From the point of view of democracy, Fascism was something much more dangerous than a reaction against Communism. It was a reaction against a whole series of incompetent, corrupt and cowardly "democratic" governments. There were far too many parties in parliament (although not so many as the twenty-eight which went to the poll at the last pre-

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Hitler elections in Germany). Nobody respected the Chamber and the members that were sent to it. During important debates newspaper men in the Press Gallery would join in, and there would frequently be a magnificent interchange of epithets between journalists and deputies. At one time, shortly before the March on Rome, special pigeon-holes were erected in the lobby, with the request that deputies who carried revolvers would leave them there before entering the Chamber. I saw Count Grandi, that charming ambassador of Italy in London, snatch up an armchair and hurl it across the Chamber at the Socialist benches, where it landed on the desk of an equally charming old Socialist philosopher who had been quietly writing letters in the midst of the turmoil. During my first year in Rome there were so many strikes that it very seldom happened that water, gas and electricity were all available, and the general strike, I discovered to my cost, was a weapon which could easily be used *ad nauseam*.

Pre-Fascist Italy should have taught observers one very important thing—that democracy is a system of government which can work effectively only in the most highly civilised countries like Sweden or Holland. Elsewhere it may encourage, or at any rate facilitate, such corruption in high places that decent men are tempted to despair of it and make no effective protest when it gives way to a government of thugs who feel that, if there are any spoils going, they may as well have the lion's share.

I had not been at Rome a week before I had suffered in patience and in pocket from incompetence and

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corruption. Most of the incompetence was my own. There was at that time as great a scarcity of houses as there was later in Moscow. But it was necessary for me to find a flat and an office with the least possible delay. I explained this to a completely sympathetic and useless individual at the Foreign Office. He, in turn, put me on to the Ministry of the Interior, where I was given a magnificent letter to the Head of the Housing Department. Nobody could have been more amiable and more full of promise. Within a day or two, he assured me, I should have a list of first-class dwellings which would not be available to ordinary members of the public. I left feeling that I was a fine fellow, but that was all the satisfaction I obtained from the Housing Department.

Friends then told me that the only hope was by private negotiation and bribery. A charming man I met in my hotel introduced me to a general who had a doctor friend who had a flat to let. In order to obtain the introduction I had to buy from my new friend a very expensive silver fox fur. I was then shown an absolutely inadequate apartment. Ultimately I found a flat in the same neighbourhood, although the general and the doctor knew nothing of its existence. Nevertheless, they demanded a commission. And in the end they got it. One of them wrote me the most terrifying legal letters and the other announced to various friends of mine that he had a special carving-knife for my benefit—the doctor proposed to do the carving and the general confined himself to letters. In the end my lawyer advised me to pay up half my commission, and after immense and

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abominably bitter negotiations I did pay. Having received what was not due to them, my general and my doctor became as amiable as they had been when we first met, and invited me out to a grand orgy at my own expense.

It may be that the muddles I made during that first year in Rome have led me to be unjust to Italian democracy. It was not the fault of the government, for example, that I decided to buy a motor car. I had taken a small villa right out in the country at Grottaferrata, in the Alban hills, and I had to devise some method of getting there. The villa itself was such a financial disaster that I should have done better never to visit it, but I did not know that at the time. It was brand new and so badly built that whenever a door slammed the whole frame shot out an inch or two from the wall and had to be plastered in again. There was no water laid on, but I was assured the pump would fill the bath in two or three minutes. It might have done had there ever been more than a small trickle of water to be pumped up. In any case the bathroom was so idiotically built that it was absolutely impossible to shut the door. For much of the time I was living alone and I used to tram over to Frascati to dine, and walk home after the last tram had gone. Walk is not really the word for it. The road led through woods that ought to have been bandit-infested. I could not, however hard I tried, merely walk. I ran, and arrived home night after night drenched in sweat.

Anyhow, I had paid a fabulous rent for this country seat and had to make some use of it. There were far too many strikes on the tramway and I was missing far

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too many stories on their account. A motor engineer, whom I had befriended, promised to look over any car that I thought of buying, and one day he turned up with a minute two-seater. I drove it round the square and, like a fool, trusted him enough to buy it on the spot. After all, he knew all about cars and was far too good a friend of mine to let me down.

My new car was handed over to me on the day when the King opened parliament. I was dressed in tight black patent-leather shoes, a morning coat and tight striped trousers. Without waiting to change into more comfortable clothes, I hopped into the car to drive off to my place in the country.

I had gone perhaps a mile along the new Appian Way when I realised that something was seriously wrong with my car. It boiled over furiously on the dustiest part of the road. I tramped across the Campagna to a distant farm-house, and borrowed a jug of water. By the time I got back my shoes were giving me hell and I was white with dust. I started off again and did perhaps another mile before the water boiled away once more. This time the nearest farm was still farther away and every lorry in Italy seemed to be trundling along that dusty road. The details of the journey are of no interest to anybody but me. But the long mile or two up the hill to Grottaferrata will always remain disgustingly fresh in my mind. The only way in which I could make progress was to back the car into the hedge, to let her into bottom gear, to jump out as she started up the slope, and to run by her side steering her as best I could for as far as she could drag herself even without a passenger. Then I would throw myself

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upon the brakes in order not to lose very much of the ground that I had gained.

For months I had a prejudice against the excellent wines of Frascati because of the number of peasants working in the vineyards who came to watch me with amazement. They did not know, as I then did not know, that the car had a cracked cylinder. All they saw was an Englishman in a white shirt—or shirt that had once been white—tight, striped trousers that he had only worn once, at his wedding when he was considerably thinner, and incredibly uncomfortable patent-leather shoes. No motor car on earth has been more unsatisfactory than that Baby Peugeot. Whenever I took it into Rome it became so hot that large crowds gathered round this small ambulating volcano. If I had it in the country I was terrified that some new disaster would happen when I was miles away from any sort of garage. Once when I took it to my office and invited lots of my friends to see it, it produced so much oily smoke when I wanted to drive away that the police intervened and fined me. In the end I sold the car again for very much less money than I had paid for it, and gave one of the largest dinners in my history to celebrate my losses.

At times, when I have had too good a dinner, the nightmare that pays me out for it takes the form of a return to the past. Once again I am running up the hill in the burning countryside with clouds of dust, leaning over so far in order to steer the car at my side that I feel my ribs will crack. On either side of the road are batteries of bewildered or laughing peasants. Two tears of bitter anger and humiliation crawl down

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my cheeks through the dust, leaving great tracks which must very much add to the oddity of my appearance. I don't know who bought that car in the end or how soon it reached the scrap heap, but never towards any mechanical affair of metal have I felt such intense hatred. Never again can I quite believe that inanimate objects have no evil will of their own.

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But I do not think that experiences of this sort turned me against Italian democracy. Its own incompetence was such that, with the best will in the world, one could not respect it. One understood, while one disliked, the Fascists. At that time they were known chiefly for their Sunday excursions; they would rush about the country in lorries firing indiscriminately in every village street. That sort of behaviour has never attracted me and I had no reason to love it in Italy. *The Times* was still edited by Mr Wickham Steed, who, in the mind of every Italian, was an enemy because he was a friend of the Jugoslavs. Therefore, *ipso facto*, I, too, was an enemy. I had only been in Rome a week before one paper prejudiced my attitude, or did its best to do so, by half a column of bitter attack on me.

Furthermore, my predecessor, William McClure—later to become Sir William—had stayed on in Rome. He left *The Times* because he was too "pro-Italian", but he merely transferred to the Embassy, where he became Press Officer. When one remembers that McClure is somewhere about six feet eight inches in height one realises the difficulties of my position. Everyone had known him as correspondent of *The Times* and he was

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still there. Nobody had known me as anything at all and they did not realise I was there. The only people who were extremely amiable when they learnt that I had succeeded McClure were a few diplomats who wanted to find out whether there was the least possible chance that they would be able to get hold of his famous flat with one of the finest views in Rome. Once they discovered that McClure was not leaving the city and that in any case I should have grabbed the flat had I been able to do so, they lost interest in me.

The Fascists, on the other hand, rapidly gained it. The least word of criticism was reported back in an exaggerated form in their newspapers as proof that I was anti-Italian. One day I committed what for a journalist is quite a serious crime. Not knowing what to send to my paper I took from some newspaper in Rome a protest about a proposal to build a power station at the foot of the waterfalls at Tivoli. I translated it almost word for word and sent it—there was my crime—without acknowledging the source. In due course the very same Rome newspaper reprinted my paragraph in *The Times* and added an angry footnote about my bitter hostility to Italy. Why was it, the editor asked, that the Italians might have to build a power station at Tivoli? Only because the British had profiteered after the war on the price of coal. By what right did an English journalist venture to criticise the Italian plans? The newspaper went on at considerable length to prove that I had been, not lazy, but deliberately malicious. As the Fascist movement grew stronger these attacks on all foreign journalists, and, I think, on *The Times* correspondent in particular, grew

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more bitter. On at least two occasions little groups of Fascists turned up at the Foreign Press Association to ask if I was there because they wanted either to attack me or to blow up any building in which I was to be found.

Nevertheless, not every Fascist knew the reputation of *The Times*. Just a few days before the famous March on Rome in October 1922, there was a great Fascist demonstration in Naples, for Southern Italy had not hitherto shown enough enthusiasm for this great new creed. The Duce himself arrived for it. He was to speak at the San Carlo Opera House and for hours before his arrival the place was crowded. I had turned up in what I thought was good time to report the meeting but found it quite impossible to gain admission. This was depressing as *The Times* had sent me to Naples for that express purpose. Therefore I went round to the stage door and, by dint of a little exaggeration and a few hints to the effect that *The Times* was almost a Fascist newspaper, I managed to get on to the stage with the regular Fascist journalists. On that day I had a better insight into Mussolini's character and power than on any other occasion.

At the back of the stage there was a drop scene from *Madame Butterfly* with a whole lot of little Japanese houses. In front of them were rows of young Fascists from all parts of Southern Italy carrying their banners, mostly embroidered with skulls and crossbones or with mottoes which no publisher would allow me to translate. Down one side of the stage was the long press table. But, as far as I remember, it was used only for people to stand on. I was lucky enough to have a chair,

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or rather half a chair which I shared with an enthusiastic young Sicilian. We could only both be on the chair together by clinging round each other's waists, and when my Sicilian saw some friend and waved to him we both fell off. But from our point of vantage we were able to see in the wings opposite where Signor Mussolini and the leaders of Fascism—the men who were leaders then; most of them have long since disappeared into oblivion—were waiting until the time came for things to begin.

The Duce was laughing and talking like any other normal human being. At least, he talked and laughed until somebody suggested to him that the time had come to address the crowd. The change was instantaneous and miraculous. Preceded by two young men blowing trumpets of tremendous length Mussolini came out of the wings and paced down the middle of the stage to the footlights. His hand was thrust in his black shirt as Napoleon's would have been had black shirts then been fashionable. His chin was thrust out as far as it could go. There was no sign of a smile, no sign of friendliness, hardly any sign of humanity on that face. For what seemed five minutes, and was probably at least thirty seconds, he stared at the crowd, and never in any theatre have I known such complete silence as during that time. The whole business was stupendous, magnificent and absurd.

A few days later I lived through an event that was much more important than it seemed to us at the time. The March on Rome had begun. For some hours there were discussions as to whether the King would introduce martial law and would authorise the government

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to stop the advance of the Blackshirts. Barbed wire was put across various roads that led to Rome, and quite probably if the King and the Prime Minister had shown any determination the March could have been turned into a rout. But that determination was lacking. I was walking along the Via del Tritone when I heard a tremendous uproar and down the hill rushed the first motor lorries bearing their load of excited Fascists. Signor Mussolini himself was nowhere near the scene. He had, throughout this period, been in Milan, and it was only when the March had completely succeeded that he obeyed the King's summons and arrived in Rome to be made the Prime Minister of a constitutional—or relatively constitutional—government.

He missed a very thrilling evening when all the furniture, files and papers of every office remotely connected with Socialism or Labour were burnt in great bonfires on the Piazza Barberini. There was actually very little beating up or bullying, but nerves were dangerously taut. I went into the Hotel Bristol, the Fascists' temporary headquarters, and asked to see one of the leaders. The moment I moved my hand towards my hip pocket to get my card case a Blackshirt drew his revolver on me. The whole business was very hateful, for the young fellows who swaggered around in those high boots, without which apparently you cannot govern in a dictator state, were so obviously incompetent and blustering little bullies who were entirely unworthy to dominate a people with a great history.

For some hours I watched the excited and noisy

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crowd, realising in a very vague way—for one did not then suspect how contagious Fascism would prove to be—that something in which I believed and hoped had been destroyed. Then I went along the Via Sistina to that wonderful terrace at the top of the Spanish Steps and looked out over Mediaeval Rome to the great dome of the Vatican in the distance. So much learning had been passed down in these old buildings, so many wars and revolutions had echoed in these old streets, that surely, I told myself, my pessimism was exaggerated. I still like to think that it was.

The next day with that defiant Liberal, Edgar Mowrer—later to be such a strong opponent of Fascism in Germany—I had the first interview that the Duce gave as Prime Minister. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon and he had just returned from his interview with the King at the Palace. On the table was his luncheon. But he did not talk informally over it as most men would have done. Instead, he stood, and made us stand, while he barked out brief and curt replies to the questions put to him by Mowrer and myself. Today, so short-lived are even Mussolini's words, I can remember his reply to only one of my questions. What would be his relations with England, I asked. They would have to be friendly, he replied, because England was strong.

The whole interview was almost menacing and definitely unfriendly, and I hurried along to give an account of it to the British ambassador, Sir Ronald Graham. I believe that he, in turn, sent back to the Foreign Office a most alarming despatch about Mussolini's intentions which was entirely contradicted by

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the charming and modest way in which the Duce talked to the ambassador when they met a day or two afterwards.

I dare say the ambassador, who later became one of Mussolini's few friends, thought I had exaggerated. But it was not that. It was that when the Duce spoke to me he was speaking to a representative of the public and must therefore sound dominating and masterful. When he spoke to the ambassador he was speaking to a representative of a foreign government and, in conformity with his general rule, was as moderate, modest and reasonable as any other statesman would be. The only occasions on which I have seen Mussolini alone I have been completely captivated by his charm and intelligence. The only occasions on which I have heard him speak in public I have been shocked by the bombastic nonsense he talked and at the same time filled with unlimited admiration for his power of dramatisation.

* * *

Some ten years after he had boasted to me while his lunch grew cold, the Duce received me again. It was not an interview that began well. I had applied for it through the Italian Foreign Office and they had promised to let me know at my hotel as soon as the interview was fixed up. They warned me the notice would be short as the interview had to be squeezed in between several other engagements. I therefore went to the most expensive hotel I could find in the hope that there could then be no breakdown in the arrangements. There was. The invitation—or rather the summons—was put in the wrong pigeon-hole, by the

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porter, and it reached not me, but a charming, elderly American lady who had not asked to see the Duce and did not want to see him. The result was that I knew nothing about it until I received a frantic message from the Italian Foreign Office asking why I had not already had my talk with Mussolini. I explained that no invitation had reached me and after a few minutes another telephone call instructed me to get down to the Palazzo Venezia with the least possible delay.

I was going just as I was—dressed in a sort of light summer suit which even the most self-conscious people have to wear in the summer in Rome. But it was explained to me that although Mussolini was waiting I must only appear in the correct black coat and striped trousers. The hotel manager, in a state of panic lest he should lose his job, hurriedly got his private car for me and I did most of my changing as I drove down to the Duce's office. In my confusion I had not taken my passport with me and that led to additional delays and formalities at the hands of the detectives, who ran their hands over me very carefully to make sure that I had no hidden weapon. At last, just an hour late, I was shown into the Duce's immense study.

Many people have described that study. But to me, perhaps the only Englishman who has ever kept Mussolini waiting for an hour since he came into power, the room was additionally alarming. You enter at one corner, and far away in the diagonally opposite corner sits the Duce behind an immense desk. The whole room is paved with tiles and you clatter across them feeling smaller and smaller the nearer you approach to the great man. I have never, since my

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first interview with Northcliffe, felt so embarrassed and nervous.

The embarrassment, of course, disappeared as soon as Mussolini began talking; the contrast between this immense study and all the other paraphernalia to embarrass one, and the straightforward simplicity when he does talk, is one of his greatest assets. He allowed me on that occasion, as somebody who had known Italy fairly well before he became Prime Minister, to fire off any questions I liked. This was too good an opportunity to be lost. One criticism that I suggested was that Fascism had failed where the press was concerned, since every newspaper was told by the Ministry of the Interior exactly what it must put on the front page, what subject must be dealt with in a leading article, and what must be left out altogether, with the result that all the papers were exactly alike, and were all equally dull.

Rather to my astonishment, he agreed. But he counter-attacked. Was it so much worse, he asked, that the press in his country should be entirely subservient to the government, working only in the government's interest, than that the press in France, or certain sections of it, should be controlled by the armament industries, or that some of the most widely circulated papers in Great Britain belonged to private individuals and were run only for private profit without the slightest sense of national responsibility. Remembering how sensationally international events were written up in some British papers, and how abominably the news was distorted in order to fit in with the whims and prejudices of their owners, I found that I had no reply.

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The suppression of public opinion is abominable, but the misuse of it you get frequently in England and France, and, to a surprisingly smaller extent, in America, is also an abomination. I sometimes doubt whether there is very much to choose between suppression and misuse.

I tried one more criticism on the Duce. There must be something wrong with Fascism, I contended, because there was no sense of humour about it. His reaction to that convinced me that the criticism was right, but that my diplomacy was wrong. No Italian, he declared, would want to criticise Fascism—it was too sacred.

When the whole interview was over I sent it as usual to his office to be "vetted". The only alteration he made to my manuscript was significant. Somewhere I had written "the Duce's laughter encouraged me to ask another indiscreet question". In the manuscript as it was returned to me the word "laughter" had been crossed out and "cordiality" stood in its place. Apparently no dictator may laugh.

When the interview was over he walked across the immensity of study with me to the door. Just as I was about to close it I turned round and had a last look at the room. The great man was going back to his desk, and something about the stoop of his shoulders made me feel that he was the loneliest man I had ever met. It is this impression far more than anything about his play-acting that has remained with me. An intensely and desperately lonely man. How, I have wondered since, is it possible for a dictator to keep any sense of proportion when he dare confide in nobody

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lest the confession of his human weaknesses should present invaluable hostages to a would-be rival and successor, when nobody dares tell him the brutal truth about anything lest he should lose his job for doing so? No man can remain sane after much more than ten years' solitary confinement, and from the moment when the Duce came back from the Royal Palace in 1922 as Prime Minister he had condemned himself to solitary confinement for life. No wonder that he underestimated the British reaction to his aggression in Abyssinia. No wonder that he sent his troops to fight in Spain's private war. No wonder that many people believe he must, sooner or later, commit some greater blunder which will get us all into trouble.

The last occasion on which I tried to see the Italian Chief of State was a month or two before the outbreak of the Abyssinian war. I had been down in Rome where I had written very critical articles, but to my astonishment my application for an interview was accepted, and the date was fixed shortly after my return to London. Two years before the Duce had given me one great reason why there would be no war. Dictators, he had said, were ambitious men and they wanted to keep their jobs. They knew, as well as anybody else, that it has seldom happened in history that a man who signed a declaration of war was still in power to sign the treaty of peace that put an end to it. Should I have the courage, I wondered, to remind him of that statement now that he was so obviously preparing for war in Abyssinia?

In the end my courage was not put to the test. Twenty-four hours before the interview was to take

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place I suddenly received a notification that it had been cancelled. I imagined that it had merely been postponed, but on further enquiry I received the reply that the Duce did not want to see me at any time or in any circumstance. So that was that.

But there was one other occasion when I saw Mussolini in conditions which will, I believe, still have a great influence on international affairs. That was in June, 1934, when the famous interview took place between the Duce and the Führer in Venice. Herr Hitler had asked for the interview. Signor Mussolini was not at all anxious for the meeting to take place, but if it must take place he was fully determined that it should do so in the best possible circumstances for himself. It certainly did so. Nobody who was in Venice at the time will ever believe that Herr Hitler went back to Berlin without an intense resentment against his rival dictator who had so successfully snubbed him.

The whole business was fantastic. The local newspapers had tremendous streamers right across their front pages: "*Arrivo di Mussolini a Venezia*". Tucked away somewhere inconspicuously near the foot was: "*Arrivo di Hitler*".

An evening concert in the courtyard of the Palace of the Doges should have been magnificent. The orchestra from the Scala theatre in Milan had been brought over to Venice for the purpose, and various opera singers of world renown were there. Unfortunately, a little before the concert began, a tremendous wind sprang up and throughout the evening it swirled round and round the courtyard, snatching the

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music from the anxious performers and scattering it about among the audience. The singers were almost entirely inaudible owing to the constant and irrepressible shouts of "Duce" "Duce" from the mass of Fascists outside. We who were among the audience could always tell when the Duce had sent some emissary to the outer balcony to order the mob to keep silence, for the frantic applause and shouts for him redoubled.

The first of the great men to arrive at that concert was Herr Hitler himself. He went up the wide staircase almost unnoticed and entirely unacclaimed. It was not until he was nearly half-way round the balcony that slight applause broke out. One distinguished Italian near me deliberately thrust his hands in his pockets, and said: "That fellow's an Austrian. I keep my hands in my pockets." It was surely not without intention that Signor Mussolini had chosen as the meeting place Venice, the one city where the resentment against the Austrians is still keenest.

The contrast between the applause for Herr Hitler and that for Signor Mussolini at the concert was striking enough. It was nothing, however, to what was to happen the next morning at the Fascist parade in St. Mark's Square. Again Herr Hitler arrived first. He had been advised to come in civilian clothes partly in order to diminish the alarm of democratic statesmen in other countries who disliked this idea of two dictators meeting to talk over the future of Europe. The advice was undoubtedly sound. But the sight of Herr Hitler dressed, despite the sweltering heat, in his famous waterproof coat, walking along one side of the square in front of rows and rows of Fascists was not very im-

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pressive. The contrast with Signor Mussolini was again tremendous. For the Duce was not content just to take so short a walk. He, of course, was in uniform and with his chest thrust out magnificently, he strutted all the way round the immense Piazza giving the Mussolini salute at frequent intervals.

Herr Hitler may have gained some comfort from the Fascist review that followed it, for the march past was so badly carried out that it was cut short in the middle. But by the time he left Venice had had so many humiliations that one finds it difficult to believe that while he and Signor Mussolini are in command of their respective countries there will ever be more than a *mariage de convenance* between them.

At the end of their discussion the Duce addressed the crowd from a balcony overlooking the Piazza San Marco. Herr Hitler was given a place at a rather remote and unimportant window from which he could see how great the enthusiasm of the people was for this founder of Fascism. By a lucky chance I was closer to the Duce than I have ever been at any other time when he has addressed the multitude. Arriving too late to get to the balcony reserved for the foreign press, I was nevertheless in time to be thrust among the guards exactly underneath the balcony from which the Duce spoke. Had he a lisp like Mr Winston Churchill the great man would have sprayed me. I was able to see every expression that passed over his face, and never have I seen such obvious contempt for an audience as I saw that day. He made people laugh, shout or weep, at will, but I got none of that impression of burning sincerity which is always given by Herr Hitler even

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when he is talking the greatest nonsense.

Next to me on the Piazza was an undersized, middle-aged Blackshirt who became so vociferous in his attempt to prevent anybody else from interrupting the flow of his leader's discourse by applause or other noises that I missed most of the speech. Perhaps for that very reason I was able to judge the whole business with greater detachment. And of this I am convinced. Signor Mussolini is a great actor with a great contempt for the people who form his audience. Herr Hitler, on the other hand, says very much the same things, although not quite so well, but has a far greater power because he believes himself in what he says.

The two men appeal to the same class of people—the immense lower middle-class of artisans, shopkeepers and little clerks. They have both had to make their own way in the world. They have both known what it is to tramp the streets hungry. They know, therefore, exactly what arguments will best appeal to the unemployed. They have both been in prison for their political opinions. Mussolini, I believe, has been in prison in three different countries—Switzerland, Austria and his own—and in at any rate one of them he was arrested as a vagrant with no visible means of support. They have, then, an understanding of the mass which makes Sir Oswald Mosley's attempt to be a Fascist leader with a nation-wide appeal look like child-play. But they use their knowledge in different ways. The Duce controls the crowd and the Führer *is* the crowd. Everything it feels he feels. And just because both men are appealing to people with narrow, drab lives they base many of their

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arguments on little prejudices, and weaknesses, and jealousies. And because they, themselves, have lived drab lives in the past they know better than anybody else how much more the crowd can be made to appreciate circuses than bread. But those of us who have children and the future to think of must be allowed still to put circuses in the second place.

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A CERTAIN Military Attaché in Belgrade tried to persuade me that, as my train left at the crack of dawn for Istanbul there was no point in going to bed at all. I had tried that method of catching trains before, and I maintained that whatever happened I intended to be in bed by eleven o'clock. Therefore he asked me to dine quietly with him at his flat. At about half-past ten I arose to go, rather pleased with myself for my strength of mind. At any rate I should have a few hours' solid sleep before leaving on my momentous railway journey towards the East. All the territory I should be crossing would be new to me, and I wanted to see as much of it as I could.

The Military Attaché did not press me to stay, but when I was almost at the door of his flat he suddenly said to his wife that he might as well take their little dog for its evening stroll. He accompanied me downstairs, tied the unfortunate animal to the inside handle of the front door, and rushed me off to some night haunt where, between dances and glasses of disgusting champagne, we discussed everything from the looks of women to the Croat demand for independence. I just caught my train, but for the greater part of the journey through one of the most beautiful countries in Europe I lay in my sleeper with the blinds down and

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damned the wheels for rattling so. At one place where I peered out of the window I saw a colossal barbed-wire fence climbing up the great bare mountains at right-angles to the railway. This, they told me, was the Yugoslav-Bulgarian frontier. I was so disgusted by this evidence of the folly of mankind that I went back to my bed.

I was tired, hot, dusty and dirty when at last the train dragged its slow way into the station at Istanbul. A young interpreter who had been sent by some travel agency to meet me had a bug crawling up his collar. The dilapidated, unpainted wooden houses of the city depressed me beyond words. Just outside my hotel window—one of the most swagger hotels in Pera—was a dirty open space on which two or three shabby little goats hunted around amongst the rubbish for sustenance. The Turkish men looked terribly dull in their Western European bowlers or soft felt hats, and it seemed a tragedy that the women went unveiled, their eyes being by far their most attractive feature. I came to the definite but premature conclusion that the Turkish war and revolution had been a failure.

High up on the hill above the Golden Horn, in the centre of the European residential quarter, stands one of the world's more depressing monuments. It represents the struggle for Turkish freedom under the leadership of the Gazi—now known as Kemal Atatürk. On one side of this monument there is the Gazi in uniform leading his men in battle. On the other side, the battle is won. There he is, in a neat European frock-coat in front of all his frock-coated ministers.

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On nearly every photograph—even on the postage stamps—he is portrayed in evening clothes with a white tie. Was it necessary, I asked myself, for him to have a war and a revolution in order to dress himself and his people in clothes that did not suit them?

* * *

What is one to do, I ask myself in parenthesis, about the smugness that goes with peace, democracy, civilisation and all the other things for which we work? Switzerland is almost the Labour Party state in being. There are no very rich and no very poor. There is an excellent system of education. Laws are really made to benefit the people. And the people are incredibly smug and dull. A Swedish friend on the League Secretariat used to tell them they had only produced one great man in history, William Tell, and he was only a myth. But that did not wake them up.

Even Sweden has its drawbacks. It is the only country I have ever visited which can justly claim to be a democracy; it seems obvious that no such claim can be made for England while one small section of the people is taught to speak differently from the vast majority which cannot afford public school fees. The snobbish barrier created in this way is as uneconomical as it is unjust, for it keeps incompetent men in positions of influence and faces the competent man whose accent is wrong with an unnecessarily difficult struggle before he can play a part in running government or industry. The Swedish people have no school barriers. They are among the most hospitable one can imagine. Their standard of life is exceptionally high. They keep out

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of wars, and in most cases, out of labour struggles. And yet, even among them life lacks zest.

* * *

I changed all my opinions about the Turkish revolution when I took the train to Ankara, the new capital, far away in Asia Minor. However drab Istanbul has become it still remains a picturesque city. Everyone tells you it is the beginning of the Orient. You start off on your journey to Ankara by taking a steamer across the Bosphorus to the Asiatic shore, and as I waited near the famous Galata Bridge for the steamer to leave I wondered how much more oriental Ankara was going to be. The odd variety of people on the steamer, the little boats scurrying to and fro, rowed by ragged men with vividly coloured sashes around their middles—this was all just the sort of thing one expected from a play or a film about the East. I suppose even the dead cat that we saw floating in the oily scum of the Golden Horn was part of the picture. And now, for the first time, I was to penetrate into the interior of Asia.

When we finally landed on the Asiatic shore I was astonished, but not thrilled. There was a large new station, rather like some modern station in Germany or Switzerland. There was a train with the usual dining and sleeping cars, and there was a bunch of diplomats to remind me of the night train from Paris to Geneva on the eve of a League of Nations Council meeting. The outside world was a little unusual—on the right, the Sea of Marmora and the lovely island of Prinkipo, where Leon Trotsky used to live as an exile, and later

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on, when we climbed up from the sea, there was a strip of land where each branch of each of the few trees was weighed down by roosting storks—but our box on wheels was to all appearances entirely European. The only camels I saw during my time in Turkey were in Europe. I passed them on my journey from Sofia to Istanbul, and they looked so out of place against a landscape exactly like Salisbury Plain that I still wonder whether they had not something to do with some circus.

After fifteen hours, we reached Ankara. On a chocolate-coloured hill is the old town, with all the noises and the smells and the colours that anybody with romantic ideas about the East could possibly desire. The walls that surround it are amazing, for they contain the whole of history. Pieces of Roman columns, slabs of stone inscribed in Greek, sarcophagi, altars—anything hard and solid has been used in building the fortifications against the different enemies that have swept over these sandy hills.

The Turks are so proud of all they have done in Ankara since it became their capital that they are very ashamed of the old town and would rather the foreigner did not visit it. But nothing has given me greater respect for the achievements of the present Turkish government than the discovery, as I pottered about among the smelly hovels and the houses of this old town, of the half-decayed leg of a horse. I was begged by a friendly but anxious official at the British Embassy to keep quiet about this discovery lest Kemal Ataturk be offended, but I could pay him no higher tribute than to contrast the old city with the new, lying a few hundred yards away at the foot of the hill.

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As I looked out of my window on my first evening there, I saw two European engineers measuring out the length of the road they had paved during the day with the help of some very modern German machine; they were as proud of their achievement as any Russians might be breaking records for their first five-year plan. At night I was kept awake by conflicting jazz bands in two rival cafés. There were no trams and very little other traffic, but at each street corner there was a smart policeman on point duty. There was an enormous modern building, the Ismet Pasha Institute, where nearly nine hundred girls were learning to design Paris hats and gowns, to write advertisements, to illustrate papers and books, to compete, in fact, with the modern business women in Europe or the United States. And the government buildings were as fine as any I have ever seen. Every hundred yards or so a street sweeper was busy collecting imaginary scraps of rubbish—in the new town. Were he to visit the old town, he would probably become the centre of an amazed and curious crowd.

* * *

This building of a modern city in Asia would be astonishing in any circumstances, but it becomes doubly astonishing when all its implications are realised. No country in the world has changed since the war as much as Turkey. Until 1926, when the Swiss Legal Code was adopted, all law was based on the sayings and commands laid down by Mahommed in the seventh century. Since no human figure must be portrayed, there were no statues in Turkey; when I was there in

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1933 I counted three of Kemal Ataturk (but none of anybody else) in Ankara alone. A drawing-master who allowed his pupils to copy any living object would have been dismissed, and photographers must have done a very poor business; now there are cheap photographers, of the sort that you find on the beach in summer, at nearly every street corner.

The attempt to adapt the Koran to modern life was of course a hopeless one, and although civil courts had been set up side by side with the religious ones, there was little hope of justice in Turkey before the war. A century ago people wore the most complicated kinds of turban which showed you every man's religion and trade. Sultan Mahommed II was threatened with assassination because he abolished the turban in favour of the fez, but it wanted much more courage to abolish the fez in favour of an ordinary hat, since a hat with a brim makes it difficult for its wearer to touch the floor with his forehead when he is praying, and Mahommed orders him to do so.

In one way and another, Turkey under the Sultans had become probably the most dangerously backward country in the world. But now the Sultan and the Kalif have gone, and the Serail is silent and deserted except for tourists. The Arabic alphabet, in which the Koran is written, has been abolished, with astonishing results when the Turks have to spell European words. Saint George becomes Sen Jorj, and "mademoiselle" is written "matmazel". "Tablidot" may worry the visitor to a restaurant and it took me some time to interpret "Ozokazion" over a shop door near my hotel. The fezes and the veils have gone, and in modern

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Ankara there are so few minarets that one could easily mistake them for the factory chimneys that we associate with our own European cities.

When one comes to sum up these achievements of Kemal Ataturk, the creator of all these changes, one realises that what he has done in the way of reform is much more likely to last than the reforms put through by any other dictator except Lenin. For he, more than any other, has drawn a wise distinction between imperialism and nationalism. The trouble about Turkey in the last century or so has been that the man who was Sultan in Constantinople, that is to say, ruler of the Ottoman Empire, was also Kalif of all the Mahomedans. There was constant friction between the religious conception and the national one, and the religious one used to dominate. The palaces at Constantinople were filled with the worst mixture of people in the world—Albanians, Greeks, Armenians, Kurds, Tartars, Slavs, and so on; and when the Young Turks began their nationalistic campaign, they made the mistake of thinking of the whole Ottoman Empire instead of only its purely Turkish inhabitants. Their nationalism encouraged the rival nationalism of the Kurds and the other peoples in the Empire, so that it was weakened instead of being brought closer together.

Among those who had decided before the war that the old system was too corrupt, too cowardly and too lazy to be reformed, was a young officer with piercing, deep-set grey eyes, who was always being sent to remote parts of the Empire to keep him out of mischief. During the war, as British troops who fought against him at the Dardanelles learned to their cost, this young

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officer, Mustafa Kemal, showed very unusual ability, but he was uncompromising and unpopular, and never received the credit he deserved. It was only after the war, when Constantinople was occupied by Allied troops under a British general, and the Sultan had become merely a puppet in their hands, that he and his friends revolted against the terms of the Treaty of Sèvres. They formed a national government in Asia and defied the world. The Sultan could do nothing against them, but the Greeks, who were to inherit a lot of territory in Anatolia as a result of this Treaty, marched towards Ankara. After a long campaign, and despite difficulties of every kind, Mustafa Kemal drove the Greeks back to the sea and marched to within a mile or two of Constantinople. The Sultan took refuge on a British warship, and Mustafa Kemal, already President of the Great National Assembly in Ankara, became first President of the Turkish Republic, and "Gazi", or "Saviour" of his country.

It was then that the soldier had to become a statesman. Constantinople had been on the western fringe of the Empire, and despite temporary disadvantages some more representative city must take its place. Ankara seems remote enough when you make the journey to it, and it is a terribly dull place for people like myself who are frightened of horses and unable to play bridge, but there is still more of Turkey to the east than to the west of it. The Arabic alphabet was so complicated that it was one of the causes why so few people could read or write, and if Turkey was to hold her own in the modern world she must adopt the Latin alphabet, so Kemal Ataturk insisted that all govern-

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ment officials should learn this Latin alphabet and was not above appearing at official receptions with a black-board and putting them through an examination. The veiling of women might be picturesque, but it was incredibly uneconomical, since a Turk had to travel with so many people to protect his wife or wives, and there could be no sensible relationship between the sexes while such a system lasted. Kemal Ataturk horrified the orthodox, not only by encouraging people to go unveiled, but even by dancing with an unveiled girl at a big public function.

The fact that every Mahommedan man had to wear a fez led to a dangerous division based on religion between the subjects of the Ottoman Empire, and by appearing in one of the most bigoted parts of Asia Minor in an ordinary European hat, Kemal Ataturk started a change the social effects of which are enormous and the picturesque effects disastrous. At first fezes were still allowed, but it can easily be imagined that by the time the Gazi returned to Ankara everybody who came to meet him at the station had discovered some sort of European headgear. For the next few months, hat merchants did the most glorious trade they have ever done. That change alone has done so much to wipe out the old rivalry between Mahommedans and Christians that I was astonished when a little boy called after me in the street the word "infidel". I am told some Turks, especially the older ones, still like to put their fezes on when they get back to the safety of their homes, but their sons will not share this same rather queer ambition, and this distinction between the two religions has gone for ever. When the wearing of hats

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was made compulsory, there was such an outcry in the eastern part of the country that martial law had to be declared, and several men were sentenced to death, but the hat has nevertheless become a symbol of religious reconciliation.

* * *

I had expected that Kemal Ataturk would be a man who was always strutting about in magnificent uniform, opening new buildings, laying-foundation stones, reviewing troops, and so on, but to his own distress the more active part of his job is done. He has put through legislation which does all that legislation can do to make Turkey an entirely modern state, and his job now is to make sure that these laws are carried out. For the greater part of his time—except in summer, when he comes down to Istanbul—he leads a very lonely life in a long grey villa at Tchankaya, on a hill a few miles out of Ankara. From time to time one notices that there are even more sentries on the road than usual. Suddenly two soldiers on motor cycles come tearing along, followed by a car driven at high speed, and two more cyclists. You may get a glimpse inside the car of the President of the Turkish Republic—an alert, upright man in an ordinary dark blue suit. A man with yellowish hair, deep-set grey-blue eyes, prominent cheek bones and very thin lips. A man in whom I should have complete trust in time of danger, and of whom I should be very alarmed if he were my enemy.

Kemal Ataturk's will is law. He has long since blazed the trail for Hitler by abolishing all parties except his own. All over the country are branches of

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his National Union, for, like Mussolini in Rome, Salazar in Portugal, Hitler in Germany and Stalin in Moscow, he hopes to keep up enthusiasm by constant propaganda in every town and village. Dictatorships always become most dangerous when the dictator dies, and the changes that Kemal Ataturk has wrought in Turkey are so great that there must be many Turks who would oppose him if they dared. But even if there were a long period of chaos when he retired from the political field, he would none the less have justified himself. Whatever happens, owing to his courage and energy the Turkey of tomorrow will bear no resemblance to the Turkey of yesterday. Like the Lenin-Stalin combination in Russia, he has made fundamental and lasting changes in his country. I am not sure that one can say the same of any other dictator.

I can remember, when I was a student of sorts in Paris, visiting the catacombs there and seeing a sentence which should encourage democrats and depress dictators: "*Nos jours sont un instant; c'est la feuille qui tombe*".

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SPAIN, everybody said, is three hundred years behind the times. What happens west of the Pyrenees cannot matter much to the rest of Europe. But the civil war that broke out in July 1936 has done more than anything since the drafting of the Peace Treaties in Paris to bring the latent crisis of civilisation to a head.

I am prejudiced about Spain, for I have spent a few uncomfortable minutes lying on my stomach in the stubble while a three-engined German bomber flew above the neighbouring Madrid-Toledo road on its civilising mission. And it is unpleasantly humiliating for anybody over forty to bury his nose in the earth and reflect what a large area of himself he is exposing to any stray machine-gun bullet.

I am prejudiced because I took refuge in a ramshackle house in Toledo during an air raid, amongst a whole lot of humble people even more frightened than I was. At the door were two or three militiamen blazing away with their rifles at a small dot of a machine far beyond their range. By my side a woman on her knees alternated her prayers with screaming appeals to these militiamen to stop firing lest they should arouse the pilot's anger. Why, I asked myself, should people who had so little knowledge and understanding of the

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weapons obliging scientists turn out for us, be dragged into this war of ideologies? "The small folk drawn into the pattern of fate."

I am prejudiced because until the Spanish civil war broke out it was possible to respect and to understand the declared aims of Fascism, even though one might think them dangerous and unsympathetic. Blood, after all, is thicker than water. We are all of us nationalists to some extent—I find that, although I may be a very harsh critic of the British climate, I become quite indignant when some foreigner has the nerve to criticise it in my presence, although it is difficult to believe that, apart from the smoke we pour into the skies from our open fireplaces, we can be held responsible for it. It is so easy to see how the humiliations of defeat or the struggle against difficult economic conditions may inflame that nationalism until it becomes almost a religion.

Germany lost so many of her nationals when Europe was carved up at Versailles, what safer and more popular card was there for Herr Hitler to play than the *Blut-und-Boden* one? The German race became more important than the German nation, and if the governments which controlled German minorities did not like the development, well, that was just too bad. I used to spend quite a lot of time trying to convince myself and other people that this preoccupation with the German race would prevent the Nazis from being acquisitive, from demanding the return of their colonies, from threatening any government unless it were one which had a large German minority and treated it badly. We were in difficulties with our subject peoples in various

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parts of the Empire, but National-Socialism was not going to make the blunder of having subject peoples. Even the abominable treatment of the Jews seemed but a symptom of this passionate Nazi ambition to keep Germany for the Germans and to avoid bringing men of other race inside the German frontiers. Even the Aryan nonsense was a guarantee against the conquest of non-Aryan people.

There, I used to argue, was the difference between National Socialism and Fascism. Signor Mussolini had never pretended to be anything else than an imperialist. Some years ago when I was revisiting Rome I went down to seek out some friends who used to live near the Palazzo Farnese, and I almost feared that lunacy must have overtaken me. Instead of the grave, dignified mediaeval palace in which they used to live I discovered an ancient Roman forum. Then they explained to me that a few acres had been destroyed in order that Mussolini might bring to light more reminders of the glories of Imperial Rome, in order to encourage his followers to build up a fresh empire. They could only do this at the expense of the British Empire, and although I believed the days of such imperialism were over, I could not imagine any British Government giving up its acquisitions without a struggle. And when I remembered the bombastic stuff which the Duce encouraged, I was not at all anxious that it should do so. But with the Germans, I argued, one could negotiate a real agreement.

But all such arguments and ideals went by the board when German and Italian arms and men were poured into Spain. Fascism, Mussolini had said, was not an

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article for export, and he was exporting it as hard as he could. But Hitler was just as bad; National Socialism had developed into an attempt to turn a civil war into an international affair in which German soldiers of the Hitler Revolution were fighting on the side of the most reactionary bunch of aristocrats in Europe.

Despite all the arguments about "Reds" and Communists controlling the Spanish Government, it could hardly be denied that on one side was the great mass of the Spanish people and on the other a small group of selfish landlords who, with the help of the officers of an army and a priesthood that had become political, had kept the peasants in an ignorance and a poverty that were a disgrace to Western Europe.

I had written a good deal along these lines before I went to Spain for two months after the civil war had broken out, and I worked for a newspaper which had, from the very beginning, argued with great perseverance in favour of the Spanish Government. I therefore anticipated a magnificent welcome at Port Bou, the frontier town. The local authorities, instead of greeting me with a flattering enthusiasm, told me to catch the next train back to France. To make sure that I did so, they took my passport away from me and told me I could have it back at the train when it arrived. I have never looked upon my passport with such affection as when the official in charge of the admission of foreigners put it on a shelf behind him well out of my reach. A British journalist had been caught a few days before trying to smuggle out documents and no other journalist was going to be allowed in.

I was free to wander round the town, but I had

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heard so much of the great importance of having unlimited passes in one's pocket that there was no great temptation to do so. But Horsfall Carter, who was with me, had hopes of the local committee. They might be persuaded to intervene on our behalf.

In a café overlooking the little harbour we found the committee. Down one side of the room was an ominous-looking row of rifles. For the first time in my life I realised how sinister a crowd of men look if none of them wears a collar and few of them shave. We waited in the ante-room for a few minutes, and then discovered that the principal member of the committee was none other than the official who had taken our passports away at the station and who had hurried down by a short cut. He was not too pleased to discover we were working behind his back, and we slunk out of the café again without having obtained anything beyond the permission to stay at Port Bou to see whether we could obtain a permit to go on to Barcelona within twenty-four hours.

A British Labour delegation—Somers Cocks and William Dobbie from the House of Commons, Lord Hastings and a cheery and courageous woman delegate, Isabel Brown—had arrived by the same train. We saw its members off by car to Barcelona and waved courageously to hide our own distress at being thus held up. They promised to intervene for us with the Catalan Government and they kept their promise nobly. I gather that they gave that government hell. We in the meantime sent telegrams to the President of the Spanish Republic, to the Spanish ambassador in London and to our own editors to appeal for help. Then we

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got hold of the official and stood him a drink.

He was a fascinating man. In some odd way at some odd time he had picked up American nationality, and his accent was that of a typical East Side "Wop". He had been shut up in a considerable number of prisons. Although he had a master mariner's certificate I should imagine that he had earned his living in ways which had nothing to do with the wide open spaces of the sea. But he was, nevertheless, a charming man. Before many hours had passed he handed us his loaded revolver to look at and in other ways showed a completely childish trust in us. He even told us things about his Anarchist colleagues at Port Bou which would have doubtless led to his immediate assassination had we passed them on. Before dusk he had promised that, whether our permits arrived from Barcelona or Madrid or not, he would take it upon himself to allow us to proceed.

* * *

With slightly diminished enthusiasm and a considerable delay we reached Barcelona, where it rained more consistently than in any other city I have ever visited. At the last station in France a rather well-dressed Spaniard in the next carriage to ours had pressed his brand new hat on to some Frenchman as a gift. Taking the hint, we had carefully packed our own in our suitcases, since they, as much as ties, were evidences of bourgeois leanings which would at the least hamper us in our enquiries. Therefore we slopped about in Barcelona with rain trickling down our necks, learning with the passing of each depressing hour that

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the Anarchists had developed an unparalleled passion for rubber stamps.

We had to obtain permits to stay where we were while we sought other permits to move on, and each document needed the stamp of at least one Anarchist organisation, of the Catalan Government, of the Socialist Trade Union Federation. A Communist stamp might also be an advantage. There were no taxis, and I developed such a hatred of Spain, Catalonia, the C.N.T., the F.A.I., the P.O.U.M., and the Communists that I no longer cared much whatever General Franco did to the whole damned lot.

Orso I felt until I met the nucleus of the International Brigade and a magnificent fellow called Nat Cohen, who had left (I believe) a tailor's shop in Whitechapel, had taken his bicycle to Calais, and had pedalled to Barcelona, to become one of the important military leaders in the Catalan fighting. Nor was he the most spectacular case. Two Belgians had walked all the way across France on their flat feet in order to enlist. And they were all desperately hard up, for their pay was negligible and they had spent it all on sending one of their wounded colleagues back to England because the British consul-general would not or could not repatriate him. The enthusiasm with which they lapped up the beer we offered them reminded Carter and me how easy a time we were having in comparison with these volunteers against Fascism. Our discontent vanished and we set about the business of getting more people to put rubber stamps on our documents with new zest.

By a stroke of luck we were able to sign on aboard

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an oil tanker going down the coast to supply the navy. For the first and, I suppose, the last time in my life I slept on the bridge. There was a full moon, and the distant coast looked so lovely that one could not believe it was the scene of the most horrible civil war that has been known in Western Europe for generations. At times, the sweet scent brought by an offshore wind was strong enough even to overcome the persistent smell of oil.

At Valencia strong cocktails on the quarter-deck of a British cruiser gave me Dutch courage. I certainly needed it, for the tales that were told me were terrifying. Near us in the harbour lay a rusty old hulk which was a prison ship. Day by day the officers of the cruiser watched political prisoners being marched off the ship and along the quay. Their bodies were found next day washed up on the shore. The Navy's impressions about the incredible villainy and brutality of the Spanish Government's supporters were, of course, supplemented by the genuine sufferings and terror of the aristocratic refugees whom their destroyers took up the coast to the safety of Marseilles. I began myself to wonder whether Valencia and its Hinterland were not inhabited by people who would have made the Borgias look like parish workers, and I very readily supplemented my Dutch courage by a handsome last lunch. When finally we went ashore my meal lay as heavily on my stomach as must the last meal of a condemned man. For two straws I would have stayed in the pinnace and gone back to the cruiser. Not for the first time in my life, I was driven forward only by the fear of the ridicule of my friends if I turned back.

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We had already learnt in Barcelona that a letter from the Spanish Embassy in London was of less than no value. But it was also by no means certain that our Catalan passes with their many rubber stamps would be accepted in Valencia. I hoped that the British Navy would be as good as its word and would come to our rescue if we got imprisoned.

The two rather ruffianly-looking gentlemen who came to examine our luggage and our passes were quite courteous. As soon as they discovered that we were foreign journalists they waved us ahead without further difficulties. We went to the railway station to see what chance there was of reserving a place in a crowded carriage to Madrid and found that we were able to travel in considerable comfort in sleeping-cars. The railway committee made difficulties, not about letting us go, but about letting us pay for our tickets. It never seemed to occur to them that, as outside observers, we might not share their enthusiasm. The more I saw of these people the more—despite their cruelty, their incompetence and all the rest of it—I found my sympathy growing for them.

* * *

Of course they had behaved badly about the churches, the priests and the nuns, although most of the atrocity stories did not "stand up" and, alternatively, as the lawyers say, the priests and nuns had asked for it. The Archbishop's Palace in Valencia had been as thoroughly destroyed as any building I have ever seen that had escaped shell-fire, but there was one small balcony near it from which, I was assured by an English

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resident who took me round, Archbishops of old had watched heretics being burnt at the stake. The tales of the immense wealth found in convents and monasteries may have been quite untrue, but they were so widely believed that one began to realise that there was an anti-clerical movement, but not an anti-religious one. It is not without reason that the churches in Spain are so often built like fortresses; long before Karl Marx was ever heard of, the crowd at every period of civil disturbance attacked the priests, the nuns and the religious buildings. One soon came to the conclusion that the Church in Spain had far too often been merely an instrument to facilitate reaction and oppression.

Of course the treatment of the aristocrats and even of the well-to-do was horrible. It gives you an unpleasant shock to be motoring along in lovely sunshine, as I did one day on the outskirts of Alicante, and to discover that the three men you took to be beggars lying by the roadside were respectably dressed bourgeois who had been shot. And one of the most thrilling moments I have ever known was when I waited on the quay in that city with a lot of refugees who wanted to go aboard a British cruiser. Among them was a woman with a small girl. You could see, despite their deliberately shabby clothes, that they had been accustomed to the greatest luxury. For eleven days in succession they had turned up on the quay with the adequate passes from the civil governor and so on, but each day the Anarchist committee which controlled the port had rejected them on some excuse or another. The British consul told me that he had pulled his last string to get one extra pass or rubber stamp.

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If the woman failed today she would have to stay in a country where her husband had already been murdered in front of her.

My turn to face the committee came just before hers. I had every conceivable recommendation and yet before I was passed my pockets were searched, my letters were read—or at least examined—and my picture postcards of the Alcazar at Toledo were taken away from me. There did not seem much chance for a woman who was Spanish and a suspect.

I walked up and down the quay with a British warrant officer who was a great diplomat. He chatted and joked with me, and all the time he was watching the woman and her little girl arguing with the members of the committee. One member, who seemed to carry most authority, slowly shook his head, and the warrant officer strolled across in the most casual way imaginable and put down a box of fifty cigarettes on the committee table. He did not want to interrupt, he explained, but he must return in a few moments to his ship and, as the committee knew, she was sailing in the morning. He would like to offer his Spanish friends a few English cigarettes.

Those few English cigarettes made the difference. The woman was allowed to go through, and she sat in the stern of the pinnace sobbing to herself and making no sound. If I were in the habit of praying I should have thanked God that the worst of her anxieties were now over.

We were aroused at four in the morning, given cups of sweet cocoa, and bundled down to a destroyer that was to take us up the coast to Barcelona. There we

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should spend another night in the comfortable belly of a cruiser and the next morning at four another destroyer would set out with us for Marseilles.

Imagine the scene. Half a mile away were the lights of Alicante—to me a lovely little town but to nearly all my companions a place which they would not for years remember without a shudder. Straight above us rose the steel cliff of the cruiser with a row of officers lined up at attention on the edge of it. Every sailor had already brought his blanket on to the destroyer's deck to lessen the discomfort of the women and babies. Most of the passengers with me had British passports, although not more than two or three could speak ten consecutive words of English. They came from a class of Spanish society which by its stupidity and selfishness had asked for this sort of revolution as a cat asks for milk. The British aristocracy keeps its jobs because it knows how to compromise, but these people, like Anatole France's definition of French logic, grew "more stubborn as circumstances changed".

But the British Navy knew nothing of that. Its job was to take on board certain categories of refugees. Not content with saving their lives, it did every conceivable thing to lessen their discomfort. As the gap widened between the destroyer and the cruiser somebody called in broken English for three cheers for the British Navy.

In that early morning air our cheers rang extraordinarily thin. But I leaned over whatever the railing on a destroyer may be called and dropped tears into the Mediterranean. For a blessed hour on that trip

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I crawled under the canvas covering of a gun turret and slept, and for another I stretched myself out under a table in the wireless operator's cabin. For most of the time I lay on the deck learning how hot and hard the steel can become and how infernally uncomfortable rivets are if they are a part of your mattress. But until we docked in Marseilles I was in a strange state of exaltation—I had never before met with so much kindness and generosity, and I had never before felt such pride in my British nationality.

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I was desperately sorry for these refugees and enormously glad that my compatriots were playing so important a part in making their lot less miserable. And yet the fate of these few individuals seemed to be of no importance at all in comparison with that of the Spanish revolution. Why was it, I asked myself, that I felt this about Spain while the cruel and unjust treatment of individuals in the Fascist countries affected my whole judgment of their systems of government? Why should my indignation over the treatment of Jews in Germany be so much greater than it is over that of aristocrats in Spain? During that trip up the coast from Alicante to Marseilles, whenever I was not too tired to think, I wrestled with this problem. Was I just as biassed and bigoted, as pig-headed and unjust as all the people I had thought of with contempt or amused tolerance during the years when I broadcast from the Olympian heights of the B.B.C. studio?

I still do not know the answers to those questions. They haunt me every time I have to write a front-page

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commentary on the foreign news. During my last term at Blundell's, one hour a week—when we should have been learning about angles of reflection and of refraction in our physics class—was devoted to the study of pamphlets about Germany written by Robert Blatchford. We were assured that every German naval officer nightly drank the toast of "Der Tag", the day on which war should break out against Great Britain. We were subtly prepared to accept the idea of war. And I do not know to what extent my horror of Nazi methods and my burning belief in the importance of freedom of conscience and of speech may make of me a minor Blatchford, preparing my younger compatriots, including my own sons, for war against a country I love. There are times when I hate the responsibility that goes with the contribution of articles on international affairs in a great national newspaper.

But there is this to be said. The end may sometimes justify the means. Revolt, such as the aristocrats in Spain and Russia had made inevitable, may be justified because it extends the freedom, the education, the opportunities of the masses. In every town I visited in Government Spain I found at least one exhibition of posters, photographs and even expanding picture postcards designed to teach people to sleep with their windows open. I found a variety of literature in bookshops of this terribly illiterate country which should put to shame the booksellers even of an extremely literate country such as Germany, if any effort to encourage thought in that country did not now carry with it the risk of imprisonment. In the see-saw of revolution and counter-revolution that has

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gone on in Spain since the flight of King Alfonso there has been on the one side an attempt, often clumsy and brutal, to extend the scope of education, and on the other an attempt to limit it.

And in the Fascist countries the revolution has been an attempt to put the clock back. Germany had, until Herr Hitler came into power, one of the most advanced and democratic constitutions in the world. Italy had a democratic procedure closely modelled on our own. In both countries the Fascist tendency has been to limit the number of people who are allowed to think, to vote, to express an opinion. Unjustifiable means to achieve an unjustifiable end. And most people I know who have visited Madrid since the civil war began, come back more exhilarated and more determined, because the discovery of a rabble of uneducated peasants fighting desperately for liberty gives them a keener sense of the danger of reaction and a greater respect for their own democracy. I daresay the same tonic is found in General Franco's army, although to a lesser degree, because so many of the aristocratic rulers still have positions of influence that the men must feel they are fighting rather to maintain an old system than to create a new one. "Spaniards in both camps", wrote Sir George Young, "seem to feel that life is today worth living, if only because it is worth dying for the life they want."

I have never had so keen a sense of the importance of freedom as I had in Spain. So keen that I have become terribly bitter against those who seek to limit it, and am no longer ashamed of my inability to be detached and calm. I have been glad enough to come

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out of Spain again and yet on each occasion I have found life elsewhere curiously flat, selfish and unimportant.

* * *

Madrid was a city of amazing surprises. I arrived there on my first visit in September well before the siege began. At that time Toledo was the main theatre of war. I went to a hotel in the Gran Via and was at once given a room with a private bathroom, competent service and very low prices. The shops, cinemas, theatres and cafés were open and were crowded. The inevitable bootblack hovered ubiquitously as in times of peace. Eggs and butter had disappeared from the market, but on the whole food was still plentiful and cheap. Since the militiamen wore overalls like mechanics there was not much to remind one of war except the motor cars that rushed to and fro with Communist, Socialist or Anarchist badges or flags to decorate them.

My love of comfort and an easy life and my anger with the committees which did their best to rob me of them had taken away most of the enthusiasm for the Spanish Government with which I had left London. But when one saw the odds they had to face one's sympathy revived. I left Spain on that first visit early in October. In Barcelona, Valencia, Madrid and Alicante I met one single Russian, namely, the Russian ambassador. And at that time the newspapers hostile to the Spanish Government were announcing the arrival of great Russian forces and supplies. I was at Alicante on the day when a Russian ship arrived. A prominent member of the local government came

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in to lunch, and I have seldom seen a man in so bad a temper. We asked him what was the matter, and he announced: "That damned ship *has* got a cargo of butter".

There was no discipline, for almost all the army and police had deserted to the rebels. Those who had not done so were of course fighting at the Front. All over the country one found militiamen armed only with old sporting guns. The crocks of half-a-dozen air forces had been sold to the Spanish Government at exorbitant prices to make their air force. The great German and Italian bombers which came and dropped bombs on Toledo were supported generally by five pursuit planes. They were met on the Government side by slow old buses which never had more than two pursuit planes to protect them.

On my first evening in Madrid I went to a café where foreign pilots serving with the Spanish Government air force met each evening. There were seven British pilots there at the beginning of the week. At the end of the week three had been killed, two had been wounded and one had gone away on leave. For they were not only flying old machines, but they were flying them for an impossible number of hours a day. I have never met men who cared less about life. They were real adventurers. Unlike the members of the International Brigade, which was later to win so much fame for itself, they were not men who had joined up out of any profound political conviction. They were almost without exception men who needed jobs and money and who found themselves on the side of the Spanish Government because the Spanish Embassy, which they

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had approached in London, had naturally sent them to its own side.

The odds were terrifically against them. The café to which they came each evening was crowded with attractively dressed women who were said to be, and almost certainly were, spies. I reproached one pilot for his indiscretions in their presence, and he looked with semi-drunken solemnity at me to see if I was serious, and then laughed at me. "What the hell do we care?" he said, "Our number's up anyhow."

The next morning I saw Indalecio Prieto, the Air Minister, to suggest that I should fly over Talavera in one of his few bombing machines in order to describe for my paper the odds with which the Spanish Government was faced. In the evening I went along to the café to ask my friend for advice about the bomber to choose. He was not there. His number was up. He had crashed behind the rebel lines and his body, horribly mutilated, had, I was told, been dropped that very afternoon at Getafe, the Government air-port. I tactfully did not pursue my proposal to fly over the enemy lines.

Towards the end of that week I went reluctantly to the café, for each night I found the bar a little less crowded. They were shot down one by one, these young adventurers, and they died as gallantly as any pilot during the Great War. One man, a South African, was wounded in an attempt to divert the enemy fire from another machine which had been badly hit. His gallantry twenty years before would have won him at least the Military Cross. He is still alive, but his name cannot even be mentioned, because he was in the

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Air Force Reserve and therefore had no right to be fighting for a foreign government. Another—the only remaining Englishman at the bar when I left Madrid—was a tall, extremely elegant young man in brown suede shoes whom I should have expected to meet at a cocktail bar in Mayfair. He had, I believe, plenty of private money, but this bug for adventure had bitten him and he had already fought in the civil war in China and in the war between Bolivia and Paraguay. Here he was fighting in Madrid in a dispute which probably interested him very much less than it did millions of others of us who were taking no risks; but that made no difference to his courage. Salute to adventurers!

I felt all the more embarrassed in the presence of people running such risks because tourists like myself who went on short visits to Spain, and then returned to the comforts of England, received so much praise that we ill-deserved. Life is nearly always so much less dangerous than it sounds. My colleagues who remained on in Madrid during the siege merit praise and credit they will never receive, because the affair will have dropped out of public memory by the time they come home.

One day remains vividly in my memory, less because of the peril it involved than because of its absurdity. When you wanted to visit the Front you had to go to the Ministry of War to borrow a car. On that particular day three of us set out in an enormous and very conspicuous white Rolls Royce which had once belonged to the Count Romanones, a former Prime Minister of Spain. The rebels had announced that they had captured Toledo; the Government announced that it still

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held the city. We wanted to see for ourselves. At each barrier on the road from Madrid to Toledo we asked the armed guards whether it was all right to proceed. They waved their hands confidently towards the north and explained that the enemy was still over there, far away to the right of the road. And thus we went on until suddenly we heard the unmistakable swish of stray bullets. We then noticed for the first time that in the ditch to the left of the road were scores of Government militiamen. We were, without realising it, passing along the road just in front of the Government front line. The enemy were not miles away to the right. They were certainly within half a mile.

We stopped the car, hopped out and took refuge in the ditch, for so conspicuous a vehicle must, we thought, inevitably be shelled and blown to blazes. There was no room to turn it on the narrow high road. The militiaman who acted as our chauffeur drove on to the village a few hundred yards ahead, turned round at a cross-road and came back to us. He drew up in front of our little bit of trench with the same superb and superior calm that one notices in chauffeurs who draw up outside mansions in Grosvenor Square. We hopped into the car again and drove down the road, to the great relief of the Spanish troops, who were as alarmed as we were lest our car should be mistaken for that of the Chief of the General Staff or somebody yet more important.

Obviously the main road to Toledo was cut, but we still did not know whether Toledo itself had fallen. Therefore we turned south-east and approached the city from Aranjuez. Before we had gone many miles

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we began to meet refugees from Toledo. They had been tramping all night. Many of the militiamen still carried their rifles. Others had thrown away their arms and had swum the river in their flight. The whole world seemed to be moving away from Toledo; only our own car, a small Ford coupé and a large lorry persisted in the other direction. In the Ford coupé was a man who quite deliberately planted his car across the road in order to hold up motor buses and lorries crowded with frightened and fleeing militiamen. On each occasion he demanded that these men should either return to the Front or should give up their rifles, and while he was arguing we wandered off into the fields as casually as we could. There was a good reason for doing so, for the motor lorry behind our own car had pointing over its bows four rifles with which to shoot down any militiamen who were not willing to listen to reason.

I believe that during that journey to Mora we were in constant and real danger, for at any moment somebody might have let off a rifle, and untrained soldiers who are fleeing from battle are not likely to stop to think very carefully where their bullets go. But in this way our companion in the Ford, who turned out to be a Communist from the little town of Ocaña, collected all the arms he needed for twelve hundred men in his town who wanted to fight but who had nothing to fight with. He was, I think, the most determined man I met on that first visit to Spain.

By February, when I made my second visit during the civil war, things had changed tremendously. Valencia had become the seat of the Government, and

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had developed all the faults which had been conspicuous in Madrid in September and October. The place was full of elegant young soldiers, Government officials, international journalists and spies. One evening in my hotel I got talking to a cheery, red-faced gentleman in the uniform of a Spanish officer. He told me that he had been a prominent Socialist in Vienna until the disturbances there in February 1934. He had spent some months in an Austrian concentration camp, some more months in a German concentration camp, and had now been given a commission in the Spanish army. He was grand company, and I sat there filled with admiration for a man who could retain so much sense of humour after so many months of imprisonment.

I went off to dinner at the Embassy, and promised to meet my Austrian friend later in the evening. When I arrived home well after the appointed hour I found the hotel lobby empty. But next morning, when I made enquiries, I discovered that my friend had been marched off to gaol as a spy. Everybody distrusted everybody else, for in a civil war far more than in a war between nations you have houses divided against themselves. The moderate members of the Government were accused of trying to flirt with General Franco, and the extremist members were accused, if they were Anarchists, of trying to prevent a united victory, and, if they were Communists, of serving only their masters in Moscow. There was so much petty rivalry that I left Valencia for Madrid convinced that the Spanish Government would lose.

The only way of reaching Madrid was by car, but

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it was not easy to arrange the passage since petrol had become so scarce. I made my visit in the company of the Spanish Ambassador to London and of the Spanish Ambassador to Moscow. Therefore we travelled in relative comfort. We had a large but extremely antiquated Rolls Royce padded with horse-hair, and I discovered during the twelve hours we took on the journey how incredibly uncomfortable horse-hair can be when it sticks out of the padding wherever you touch it. Any doctor who saw me afterwards would have sent me to an isolation hospital. We had also a completely unnecessary military escort in another car, and we had an uncomfortable number of packages of food and tobacco for friends in the capital.

The distance between Valencia and Madrid was almost three hundred miles, for the main road had been cut and was under fire at Arganda, some twenty-five miles from the capital, and we had to make a detour for safety's sake. Along the whole course of those three hundred miles we passed only two filling-stations where petrol could be obtained. Although this one road was almost the only link between Madrid and the outer world I worked out that there were less than two motor vehicles a mile on it. Madrid, I decided, must be on the very verge of starvation.

We reached the city after dusk, and were at once taken to General Miaja's headquarters. We walked through endless corridors in the basement of one of the ministries. The nearer we came to his headquarters the fouler the air became, for his ante-room was crowded all day long with people waiting to keep or make appointments. The general himself was cheerful but

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not very impressive. A rounded little man dressed in a very thick rough brown lumber jacket and trousers, he irresistibly reminded one of A. A. Milne's teddy-bear which "however hard he tries, grows tubby without exercise". He had all that fatherly geniality which gave General Primo de Rivera a position in Spain that everyone of his successors has envied. In the corner of his office stood an ultra-violet ray lamp which presumably compensated the poor old gentleman for his terrible lack of fresh air.

Thanks to him we were billeted in the Palace Hotel. Except for one floor it was now a military hospital, and the smell of anaesthetics as we entered the building made me wish at first that we had gone to some other place. But I had not then realised how exceptionally lucky we were considered to be, for the rooms were reserved either for distinguished visitors or for members of the Communist Party. Despite everything I had heard about the food shortage and the evidence of my own eyes as we had driven from Valencia, we sat down to an enormous dinner which in some incredible way included fresh sole. An excellent Burgundy was produced from the cellars, for every hotel and restaurant was ridding itself of its better wines at a very low price in the fear that otherwise it might be robbed of them. I went to bed with the same comfortable but semi-guilty feeling that I might experience after an excessively extravagant dinner at the Carlton or the Ritz.

I awoke in the early hours of the morning and reflected on the absurdity of it all. Here was I, with four or five electric light switches within reach of my

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hand and with a comfortable private bathroom a yard or two away from my bed. The bed itself was as luxurious as any I have ever known. And yet I could hear the constant creak of another bed in the room above as some poor devil of a wounded soldier twisted and turned in his fever. And, as clearly as though it were happening in the next street, came the sound of rifle and machine-gun fire in the front line.

And this was not all. The road along which I had travelled to Madrid less than twelve hours before had been defended by the International Brigade. The same young men who had so terrified many of our Diehard Conservatives by voting in the Oxford Union against war were fighting in a struggle which superficially had nothing whatever to do with them. They were putting up with far greater discomfort than we had known in the war of 1914-18, and there was for them none of that glory and honour which consoled us for so many hardships. There are many occasions when life seems an odd business. Never has it seemed more odd to me than in the early hours of that morning at the end of February in 1937.

* * *

Two features about Madrid were tremendously impressive. One was the development of a sense of discipline since my last visit there four months previously, and the other was the way in which hundreds of thousands of women and children went about their ordinary daily life as though they were not under the perpetual menace of death from aeroplanes or artillery.

The men in the front line in the University City

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saluted with a smartness which might not have impressed the sergeant-major of the Guards, but which was astonishing to those of us who remembered the haphazard rabble of men who had formed the militia in the autumn of 1936. They had built barricades and trenches of which any modern army might be proud; four months previously there had been, along the whole length of road from Toledo to Madrid, not one trench nor one strand of barbed wire. They still wasted their ammunition by firing at great buildings as though the chip made out of a brick by a rifle bullet was going to win them the war, but there was a parade in our honour and the keenness with which this strange citizen army marched past was both memorable and pathetic.

I commented on their untidy uniforms. "Why should they worry about tidiness?" asked a Spanish friend who stood by me. "These men are dressed for death." And in a sense that was true. To what extent General Franco really took prisoners at that time I have no means of telling, but it is quite certain that every man who marched in that parade was convinced that if ever he were captured and Madrid were to fall he would be murdered without trial.

The normalcy of life in Madrid in February and March may have been due less to conscious courage on the part of the people than to the fatalism which you find so often in Mediterranean countries. But, whatever the reason, the calm of the capital in the midst of its siege was so extraordinary that nobody who witnessed it is ever likely to forget it. Except for the fact that all street lights were turned out at night, I had the greatest difficulty in remembering that less than

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a mile away were guns, rifles, machine-guns, tanks, and not much more than a mile away were aeroplanes that at any time might come to bomb the capital.

Here and there there were shell-holes but you seldom recognised them as such. A great cavity in the Puerta del Sol, where a bomb had gone right through the road into the Underground Railway, might easily have been mistaken for one of the excavations that are essential to the normal life of a big city. The Telefonica building, Madrid's one sky-scraper, had been hit by I know not how many shells, and yet at first glance one might almost be excused for not noticing the damage. Many of the windows had been bricked in, but only a few chips had been cut out of the grand, towering profile of the building. In the Gran Via, where I had stayed in October, there were few shop windows left, but those shops that were open still seemed to be doing business as well as, or better than, ever.

The streets were not so clean as they had been. Here and there one found pet dogs which had descended in the social rank to the status of curs muzzling around in the piles of rubbish for scraps of food. Nothing brought home to me the underlying misery of Madrid more than the way in which one of these gaunt, unhappy brutes attached itself to me because I spoke to it in a language which, although English, it knew was friendly. It followed me through the dark streets when I was coming home late at night from the Telefonica building. For a distance of four or five blocks it would not come near me. When at last it did timidly approach me and I patted it on the head the beast went mad. It skipped

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around like a young lamb in the spring, and when I looked out of my hotel bedroom window an hour or two later it was still waiting patiently near the entrance in the belief that it had at last found a home and a master. But from the appearance of the people it was almost impossible to tell that Madrid was suffering misery such as no other great capital has known.

The moment one passed the barricades and began going down the hill towards the Manzanares river the change was complete and fantastic. Almost every house had been bombed or shelled, and in many cases the bombs had pierced the ceiling and floor and had burst on the ground level or in the basement in which those who are occupied with the defence of the civil population tell us we must take refuge in the next war. In the famous Model Prison there were so many shell-holes that no man could have been kept a prisoner. The desolation of the place was emphasised by a large pile of rats which somebody had killed and been too lazy to take away. Here and there in the neighbouring streets lay the smelly and rotting bodies of mules. In an extraordinary number of houses mirrors still hung unbroken on tottering walls—"in order", said my Spanish friend, "that they might reflect the tragedy of Madrid". And scattered around the prison yard were the crime-sheets of men who had long since disappeared. I picked up one and brought it home as a souvenir. It recorded the arrest, on July 21st, 1936, of a young man accused of military rebellion. On the 9th of the following month he was tried by a special judge. On the same day he lost his life.

The war was run on such haphazard lines that only

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the sight of these dreadful ruins compelled one to realise how serious and tragic a business it was. One morning in Madrid I paid a visit to the front trenches in the University City in the company of a sort of Cook's tour which included two ambassadors and at least fifty officers. As we walked down the hill we were in full view of enemy territory on the far side of the river—perhaps half a mile away—and yet no shrapnel came to scatter us and no sniper picked us off one by one. They took me to the flat roof of a building only a few hundred yards from the enemy trenches. I had been taught that one unbreakable rule in warfare was never to expose myself against the skyline. And yet we were assured it was quite safe—and experience proved that it was—to peer over the top of the wall and study the enemy landscape through field-glasses. A few dozen really well-trained snipers could have caused large casualties and kept down the idiotic waste of ammunition which I shall always associate with what little I saw of the Spanish war.

My two most vivid memories of that war have nothing whatsoever to do with personal risk. One deals with the Duke of Alba's palace in Madrid, the Palacio de la Liria, which I first visited in September. The militiamen at the gates informed us that it had been taken over by the Communist Party, but our passes from the War Office enabled us to go inside. The Communist Party were, in fact, in possession, but its members lived only in the servants' quarters. All the superior rooms were entirely untouched. Here and there were silver ash-trays and other small articles which might so easily have been slipped into militia-

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men's pockets. In every room where there were pictures of any value—and the Duke of Alba had one of the finest private art collections in Europe—were notices that smoking was strictly forbidden by the Communist Party. In the Duke of Alba's own dressing-room were some forty suits of clothes at a time when good English cloth would have been tremendously welcomed by militiamen in the growing cold of the Guadarrama nights.

Looting was in progress, however. In the grandest wine cellars I have ever visited, surrounded by bottles that would have filled every connoisseur with envy, I was offered, as a very great honour, a small glass of rather indifferent sherry. Upstairs I found two Communists painstakingly making out an inventory of dusters, soap and scrubbing brushes which were to be sent to military hospitals. But nothing else was touched.

I went back to the Palacio de la Liria, or to the ruins of it, a few months later. It had been hit by General Franco's incendiary bombs during the early days of the siege. Most of the pictures had been saved, in some cases at grave personal risk, and were on show in Valencia. There was, in that great building, only one room that had escaped all damage, and it was still littered and lumbered with furniture, statues, cushions and curtains. The workmen who were going around the ruins to remove beams and bricks that were in danger of falling used to throw their jackets into this room, and the Spanish Ambassador in London, Pablo de Azcarate, who was with me, brushed against one of these jackets and knocked it to the floor. As he picked

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it up again he noticed near it a very fine inlaid box, opened it, and found that it was filled with antique silver.

Oh yes, the men told us, they knew the silver was there, but they weren't particularly interested because it wasn't theirs!

In the ruins of the Duke's private chapel there were some fine frescoes by Sert which had virtually escaped damage. And, in the middle of the siege of Madrid, less than half a mile away from the front line near the River Manzanares half a dozen workmen were busily building a wall to protect these frescoes from the intemperance of weather and war. In England many newspapers were printing vivid accounts of the incredible barbarities of these same workmen.

There have been horrible barbarities. I have not the slightest doubt that thousands and probably tens of thousands of decent and harmless individuals were murdered, especially in the first few months, but I have found no evidence to show that the Government did not consistently try to prevent this campaign of revenge and murder or that General Franco, on his side, never organised mass shootings as part of a deliberate policy.

The second vivid memory of Spain deals with a night journey by car from Madrid to the coast at Alicante. There was a full moon which lit up the burnt ochre plateau of La Mancha, with its windmills the height of a man on horseback. The villages shone white, seemingly unchanged since the days of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. Above each of them, dominating each of them, was an imposing and often richly beautiful church tower. I thought of my own Dorset villages,

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where the old stone church no more dominates than does the inn or the general store and post office or the policeman's cottage. And I looked with new sympathy at the men who appeared from the shadow of some hovel when our car was held up by a barrier of logs or tar barrels. They were the colour of old walnut and they wore berets like tam-o'-shanters and great plaid blankets thrown round their shoulders. A few of them carried sporting guns, and they looked as though they would willingly have fired them off at us. They were some eighty miles from any fighting, but they studied our passes with the deepest suspicion. Only when they realised we were friendly foreigners did their faces crease into deep smiles of welcome and their clenched fists go up in salute.

I thought back to our own war period when elderly doctors and bankers and solicitors and shopkeepers who were not needed in the army turned out in their thousands as special constables to guard bridges and water-works against mythical dangers. Men whose desire to serve their country was such that they gave a dignity to the most ignoble and idiotic tasks. There was the same spirit about these Spanish peasants who pored over our passes in the light of the moon.

Nothing worth remembering, perhaps. But, as I lay awake in a bug-ridden bed in a horrible and airless bedroom already occupied by two other men who had conceived the same unfortunate idea of getting three hours' rest in Albacete, I thought again of those peasants. Such kindly, dignified men, I said to myself, should not and could not lose their war and be forced back into serfdom. More desperately than ever, I

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wanted the Spanish peasant to win in his struggle, to be given a chance to drag himself out of the frightful poverty and ignorance in which he has been kept throughout the centuries.

* * *

But the Spanish revolution is not confined to those who have fought in it. Its effect upon many of us who have followed its course fairly closely has also been profound. I now know that Communism may be a religion as capable as Nationalism of finding its martyrs among normal young Englishmen. The men I met in the International Brigade were not woolly-haired and woolly-minded cranks, but in many cases the typical products of our public schools who happened to have "gone Left". They talked with the same enthusiasm, the same readiness to sacrifice themselves, the same desire to kill as a matter of duty as we showed in 1914 when we were fighting for the independence of gallant little Belgium, for justice, for freedom, for decency, and for all the admirable things you could find listed in one set of columns in Roget's *Thesaurus* against all the evil qualities you could find listed in the other set of columns.

I admired and liked these volunteers but I could not follow them. I cannot, twice in one lifetime, cultivate so grand a crop of illusions that I believe any cause justifies the mass murder called war. I advocate every measure, including measures that involve risk of war, to check the dictators because I believe that they are at heart at least as cowardly as other people and that, unless they can be warned off dangerous territory, they must sooner or later stamp around on ideas that we

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hold so sacred that we shall fight to protect them. Then these boasters will be blown up, and we with them. I found, among the young Communists in Spain, the same conviction that they alone had seen the light as I used to find, when I was a boy, among the kindly and quiet Franciscan monks at Fiesole. I envy them, but I cannot emulate them.

I know now that the Conservatives in this country, who have almost succeeded in convincing other people as completely as they have succeeded in convincing themselves that their interests and those of the British Commonwealth are identical, have no better claim to be patriots than the wildest little Communist shouting revolution in a London park. They have forfeited that claim by their behaviour in the Spanish crisis, for they have preached class war with as much fervour as any follower of Karl Marx. The men they have supported in Spain were almost without exception opposed to the British Empire during the war. The men they have supported in Spain have turned for help to the only two men who might wish to make war against us, Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini. They have refused to consider the threat to Imperial communications which will arise from Italian ownership of the Balearics or German control of Spanish Morocco and Rio de Oro and the Canary Islands. And why? Because on the one side were the charming but useless Spanish aristocrats with whom they used to dance or play polo or chat at house parties, and on the other were the tieless and collarless humble peasants of Spain.

I know now that I admire British Conservatives for their patriarchal and often entirely disinterested social

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service. That I admire British supporters of the Labour Party for their sturdy common sense and good humour. That I admire British Liberals for their belief in principles. And I know that I belong to none of those parties. Had it not been for the Moscow trials I might have become a Communist. Were it not for the trade-union influence I might join the Labour Party. Were it not for their strange blending of bloodlessness and sentimentality I might belong to the Liberals. Had the Tories not been so selfish and short-sighted about Spain I might have become one of them. But I see nothing to choose between the Conservative and the Communist types of class warfare, and I care for neither.

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AND so here I am in the early forties, not settled and sure of myself as I should be at that age, but more doubtful about my creed than a boy who has just left school and quite as uncertain about my ambitions. I have not the imagination (or the courage to renounce good company, good food and good drink on behalf of myself and my family) to be an author on a serious scale. I have not the money, the energy or (except when I am with several of them, and then only because the House of Commons seems to retain all the pleasanter qualities of a public school) the desire to have a shot at becoming a member of parliament. I should hate to carry on for another ten or twenty years churning out my little piece for a daily newspaper on the *démarche* made by some ambassador or the *fait accompli* with which some government has faced a startled and worried world. I have deliberately taken an attitude over Spain which has spoiled my only chance of a vastly more interesting job in journalism.

But what have I by way of compensation? The pleasantest colleagues in Fleet Street. Contentment at home, although I find myself treating my elder son with much the same lack of tolerance and understanding as my own father showed when I, too, was only nineteen (and the best I can hope for is that, one

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day, both boys may come to regard me with some of the grateful affection that I now feel for their grandfather). And masses of friends.

Years ago, scribbled on a blotter in a post office in Basle, I came across two lines which have stayed in my memory.

Man sieht sich, lernt sich kennen,
Man liebt sich, muss sich trennen.
(One meets, becomes acquainted,
One loves, and must be parted.)

There have been so many in these years of wandering who have added to my joy of life and have gone on their way forgotten! My old diaries are devastating proofs of my fickleness—so often I puzzle over the name of somebody about whom I jotted down enthusiastic remarks and cannot recall who owned that name. Rowdy evenings in the Café Royal (where I have spent so much money that I feel the directors ought to vote me a free meal a week, with at least a bottle of my favourite Number 52, for the rest of my life). Friday lunches at the Commercio in Soho where we have wasted so many pleasant hours arguing about how to put the world right. Talk, smoke and alcohol all confused at the Taverne in Berlin, the Srpske Kral in Belgrade, the White Horse Inn in a village at the foot of the South Downs, at the bar or the billiard table of the old International Club in Geneva, at Ranieri's Restaurant in Rome (where, for a year or two, there appeared on the menu a dish which bore my name!).

And so much more besides! A few moments of such utter happiness that the whole world dissolved around me. That unbearable loneliness which one

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somehow bears and is afterwards glad to have borne. Not very many deeds that I regret. Perhaps not so many disappointments as I ought to have known—otherwise I should not still remember one poignant moment when they put me under an anaesthetic to chop off the monkey's tail at the end of my spine!

I had broken it while I was doing a Russian dance to show how fit I was after a ski-ing holiday from which I seemed to be almost the only person to return unscathed. For eleven months I was in constant pain, and I became the politest passenger in every bus and train, for it hurt less to stand up than to sit down. Doctors, osteopaths, radiologists and all sorts of other people did useless things to me and at last one surgeon offered to cut me about without even promising he could cure me.

I was very frightened, for some idiot had told me that a slight slip of the knife would rob me of the use of my legs. And just because I was so frightened, it became essential that I should make some careless gesture. I decided that just before they clapped the mask over my face, I would wave my hand in farewell and say "Cheerio, everybody".

When the time came I forgot. Not until I was already struggling for breath and sliding down that horrible slope into unconsciousness, did I remember. I mumbled something entirely unintelligible into my gas mask and tried to raise my hand to wave it in farewell. The matron seized it firmly and not very gently and put it back in its place. "That's all right", I heard her say. "You are all right. You need not be frightened."

And seldom have I been so deeply disappointed as during those few moments before I became temporarily

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dead. For I might really die and nobody would know the heroism of my last gesture.

* * *

The last words of this book are written in a lovelier study than I ever expected to call my own except in the remote days when I imagined myself living, as a successful writer, in some cottage in Cornwall or villa in Capri. The walls are built partly of wattle which, when it was pulled about during alterations for my benefit, proved to be as strong as when it was first chosen by some local craftsman five or six hundred years ago. A beam in the next room which had to be moved stopped the builder's steam-saw three times before it could be cut to fit its new purpose. For more than five hundred years this place has stood. It has been added to and adapted, but within its walls one finds a little of that peace of mind which comes from a feeling of continuity.

So long before Mussolini and Hitler and Stalin appeared to give us uneasy dreams men built the bridge of warm-red brick which I see from my study window; watched, as I watch, the river go silver, golden and dark as the evening comes over the valley; went out to work in the fields and came home, tired, to gossip about King Henry and his many wives, or the burning of Cranmer or the Spanish Armada or the execution up in London of King Charles or the terrors of the Great Plague.

Some people are armed against their daily worries by their conviction that the soul is immortal, that God, who knows of the death of every sparrow, will reward them in Heaven for things that have gone wrong for

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them on earth. I have not that consolation. But with this view in front of me, with these beams and bricks which (*pace* the Building Society!) I can call mine for a short period in their history, I find a new and better sense of proportion. I am part of something so much bigger than myself, that has lasted for more than ten times my own span of years of life. So many things which have seemed to me important now matter less than the digging of a new ditch to drain the slope near the river or the planting of a sapling which may, years hence, give fresh dignity or beauty to the view. I plan with all the serene confidence that others show when they talk of the happinesses of the after-life.

And yet almost every hour of the day I hear the drone of an aeroplane engine as some machine passes overhead on its way from London to the coast. My two sons carry on with the important job of the moment with never a glance up at mechanical miracles which have become as accepted a method of transport to them as a motor car is to me. They have never stood by the road to Toledo and shamefully thanked God when a bomber passed overhead and dropped its load not on us but on a village sufficiently remote for our imaginations to shut out the vision of terrified women and children and old men.

Most of this book, I say to myself, deals with the nineteen years since the Armistice. Suppose I were to write a second volume in nineteen years' time! Would it find me still living quietly in this house, the first place I have ever called "home" since my boyhood?

For the first time in my life I am learning to observe the march of the seasons with a fraction of that interest

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and appreciation which my earlier ancestors must have experienced when the mere struggle for existence led them to know the importance of every passing cloud, taught them to fashion early tools for mastering the soil, left them with so little time to worry about remote wars and to accept those that came their way with the same sense of inevitability as that in which we accept the wind and the rain.

But can I find lasting escape by trying to shut out the wider world? Ignorance is indeed bliss, but I cannot claim the excuse of ignorance. I know that there is a civil war in Spain, a mad race in armaments because politicians have not had the courage to be statesmen, a vile inequality in the distribution of the world's wealth between nations as great as that of a nation's wealth between individuals, a cowardly acceptance of cruelty and injustice because governments dare not intervene to prevent them.

* * *

I am of those whose indignation against injustice and misery is great enough to make them an infernal nuisance to everybody in their immediate neighbourhood. My anger that so few people can enjoy the view from my study and the cool scents from my garden is such that it very nearly destroys my own appreciation of them. Very nearly, but not—thank God—quite. Possibly in time I shall become wise enough—or callous enough—to cease to care.

After all, what have I got to do with world affairs? How grand it would be if I could learn to mind my own business—to work just hard enough to give my

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wife and boys a few luxuries with their necessities and myself an occasional glass of beer at the "Golden Fleece" just across the road!

But this very morning, sitting in my garden, from a report of a speech by Mr Ramsay Muir in the *News Chronicle*, I read: "There are 11,000,000 wage earners in this country with incomes less than £125 a year. The average wage is below £100. They are all below the standard of livelihood which can make decent material conditions of life possible. . . . The nation had 10,000 people who drew incomes averaging £20,000 a year. . . . That contrast was incompatible with the spirit of democracy. . . ."

And I know that my peace of mind is a sham, that this old brick and timber house, much as I love it, will never be a sanctuary from the prison of the outside world.

"May I take it, Mr Bartlett," a very young or indiscreet interviewer might say, "that ambition or greed have nothing to do with your admission that you cannot renounce the world?"

If I told him he might so take it I should deserve the fate of Ananias. What did happen to Ananias, anyhow? My sons, despite their expensive education, don't know. I, despite mine, have forgotten. And I cannot be expected to find out, for I have promised myself today to chop down a tree which blocks the view of the Hog's Back. If you have ever wielded a woodman's axe you will understand.

ELSTEAD, and in the train
between Guildford and London.

August 1937.

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VERNON BARTLETT

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